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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Agenda item 55 (*continued*)

Globalization and interdependence

(b) International migration and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871)

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/61/187)

The President: The General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 60/227 of 23 December 2005, will continue the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

Before we continue with the list of speakers, I would like to inform members that we will first hear the summaries of the deliberations of the four round-table sessions by the Chairpersons of the respective round tables.

I give the floor to the Chairperson of round table 1, Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Filatov, Minister of Labour of Finland.

Ms. Filatov (Finland), Chairperson of round table 1: I am summarizing today the main points from the debate that took place in round table 1, dealing with the effects of international migration on economic and social development.

I would like to emphasize the excellent and constructive spirit of our discussions. The discussions in this round table centred on five key points.

First, the round table underscored the substantial positive impacts of international migration on social and economic development, while noting certain negative impacts as well. There was general agreement that the importance of international migration will increase in future and that it was therefore crucial for the international community and for Member States to focus on maximizing its benefits while minimizing the risks associated with it. To do so, coherent policies were needed, both within and among countries.

We noted that countries often play multiple roles, so it was therefore not useful to distinguish between countries of origin, destination or transit. We noted also that migrants themselves, by creating social ties and transnational networks, were a key part of the migration process and its impact on development.

Secondly, labour migration was central to the discussion of migration and development in terms of both the motivation for international movements and their consequences for development. The discussion focused in particular on the economic benefits, which would increase if the labour market functioned more efficiently.

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Issues such as decent work and migrants' rights were also underlined in this context. Certain detrimental consequences were noted as well, particularly those due to the loss of highly skilled workers in many developing countries.

These effects of the brain drain were most severe in the health and education sectors, leading to a decrease in the quality of those services. In some countries, the emigration of skilled personnel has been eroding human capital, with potentially dire consequences for the long-term sustainability of those countries' development. Even though many interventions concentrated on economic aspects, it was recalled that social and cultural aspects are equally important.

Thirdly, we discussed various approaches for eliminating some of the negative consequences of migration and enhancing its positive role in development. In that context, the importance of recurrent and circular migration was underscored, since migrants who return — even for short periods — are often agents for development. Highly skilled returning migrants have much to contribute to promote the economic dynamism and development of countries of origin.

Participants considered various ways in which permanent or temporary return can be promoted. Thus, Governments were encouraged to cooperate with the private sector in establishing reintegration programmes and promoting, among other things, increased employment and investment opportunities for returning migrants.

It was acknowledged that transnational diaspora communities can make important contributions to the development of countries of origin. We recognized the need to foster contacts between countries and their citizens abroad, especially with those who are highly skilled, or who possess skills in short supply in their countries of origin, so as to facilitate the emergence of more active knowledge networking. The important role played by remittances in supporting well-being was also cited by several participants. However, it was emphasized that not only economic remittances, but also the transfer of knowledge and innovation, can play a major role.

Fourthly, several participants commented on the need for greater collaboration between countries of origin and countries of destination to enhance the portability of pension benefits and to ensure that migrants are not penalized for working throughout their productive lives in more than one country. A related point was the desirability of single taxation arrangements. Many participants stressed that remittances should not be taxed twice.

Fifthly, participants emphasized the importance of creating desirable living and working conditions in countries of origin so that migration is truly a choice, not a necessity. The importance of migration policies, international development policies and poverty reduction strategies was mentioned frequently. Key factors in that regard include, inter alia, the promotion of good governance, the protection of human rights and the improvement of labour market conditions in societies of origin. Greater emphasis on capacity-building is needed.

Lastly, it was noted that intergovernmental cooperation, whether at the bilateral, regional or global level, is important to support many of the processes that increase the economic and social benefits of international migration. Governments were urged to find ways to enhance such cooperation.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Margarita Escóbar, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, who will report to the Assembly on behalf of the Chairman of round table 2.

Ms. Escóbar (El Salvador): I shall read out the following summary on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Francisco Lainez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

> "I have the honour to summarize the excellent debate that took place in round table 2, which focused on measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants and to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking in persons.
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> "The discussion in our round table was lively and enriching, enjoying broad participation by Member States, United Nations entities and representatives of civil society. We also benefited from the participation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour. It is thus with great pleasure that I will share with the Assembly some of the key insights that emerged from the discussions.

"There was agreement that migrants were, above all, human beings endowed with fundamental and inalienable rights. Human rights should be considered part of the necessary foundation linking international migration to development, since, as participants stressed, it was only when the human rights of migrants are recognized and safeguarded that the positive contributions to countries of origin and destination could be fully realized.

"It was emphasized that all States — whether they be points of origin, transit or destination for migrants — had the obligation to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants, irrespective of their status. Of particular relevance was the protection of the rights and freedoms of groups that are more vulnerable to exploitation, such as children, young people, women, indigenous people, persons with disabilities and migrants in irregular situations.

"The importance of social, economic and cultural rights was stressed, especially as their observance underpinned the successful integration of migrants into host societies. There was agreement that it was paramount to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to combat xenophobia and racism. The Governments of receiving countries had the responsibility to oppose discriminatory, racist or xenophobic attitudes and to promote respect and tolerance.

"Member States were urged to ratify all core human rights instruments, in particular the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It was noted that that Convention reiterated many of the obligations to which States were already bound because they were parties to the other core human rights instruments. Member States were also urged to become parties to all relevant International Labour Organization and United Nations conventions and to ensure their full implementation.

"It was stressed that national legislation on international migration should reflect internationally agreed human rights standards. Trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants were recognized as major challenges facing the international community today. Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination were judged to be essential in effectively combating those crimes. Member States were urged to cooperate more actively to prevent those crimes and to bring perpetrators to justice.

"It was emphasized that trafficked persons were victims and that they were entitled to protection and assistance. Several Member States gave examples of good practices, including media campaigns to warn potential migrants about the dangers involved in trying to cross borders irregularly or about the ploys traffickers use to ensnare victims. Another good practice was granting permission to stay to victims of trafficking.

"It was emphasized that the ratification and implementation of United Nations instruments regarding trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants was essential, especially as they provided a framework for international cooperation in those matters.

"While trafficking and smuggling were crimes, migration was not, and should not be criminalized. Participants urged Governments to protect the victims of trafficking in persons, in particular by safeguarding their human rights. Some participants argued that restrictive migration policies were at the root of increased irregular migration and that they made people more vulnerable to falling prey to traffickers.

"Noting the increased feminization of migration, particularly labour migration, the need for a gender-sensitive approach in formulating international migration policies was underscored. It was stressed that, in many circumstances, female migrants, particularly those working in poorly regulated sectors, such as domestic service, were more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than male migrants. It was therefore urgent to take effective measures to protect the rights of female migrants, irrespective of their occupation or migration status.

"Lastly, several delegations expressed satisfaction with the opportunity afforded by the High-level Dialogue to discuss the issues of international migration, development and human rights, and supported the Secretary-General's

proposal to establish a forum to follow up on the discussions that had taken place at the High-level Dialogue."

The President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of round table 3, His Excellency Mr. Kastriot Sulka, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Equal Opportunities of Albania.

Mr. Sulka (Albania), Chairman of round table 3: I have the pleasure to present a summary of the fruitful debate which took place in round table 3, which focused on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development, including remittances.

The round table, which benefited from the active participation of representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and civil society, discussed the various aspects of international migration with a view to finding ways of enhancing its benefits for development. Appreciation was expressed for the substantive support for the round table provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo. I will now highlight some of the main conclusions of the round table.

It was recognized that, in order for international migration to benefit development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, it was necessary to capitalize on the skills acquired by migrants while abroad. It was also necessary to reduce the transfer costs of remittances and to strengthen the benefits brought about by such transfers by, among other things, increasing the capacity for productive investment and improving access to financial services in countries of origin, particularly in rural areas.

The potential of remittances to reduce poverty was underscored, and participants focused on strategies to maximize their development potential. However, some of them warned that remittances could create dependency among recipients. The importance of finding ways to reconcile the positive effects of remittances on poverty reduction with their possible negative impact was underscored. Participants also stressed that remittances were private funds that primarily benefited the families that received them and should not be viewed as a substitute for official development assistance.

There was consensus on the need to reduce the transaction costs of remittances, since such lower transfer costs could significantly contribute to increasing the funds that actually reach the families of migrants. Participants called on countries of origin to take a pro-active approach to enhancing the development impact of migrant contributions and savings, particularly by collaborating with the private sector to widen access by migrants and their families to financial institutions, including micro-credit institutions.

Civil society organizations, including migrant associations, could play an important role by providing financial counselling to migrant families and by advising and supporting them in the area of entrepreneurship. Access to such support was a means of leveraging the benefits of remittances for development. Coordinating measures to support or promote entrepreneurship in countries of origin were thought to be useful.

The involvement of transnational communities in fostering the development of countries of origin was thought both desirable and essential to maximize the benefits of international migration. Participants acknowledged the positive contribution of transnational communities and networks to the development of communities of both destination and origin. It was recognized that the establishment of knowledge-sharing networks involving members of migrant communities could benefit countries of origin.

A number of participants called for further initiatives to explore policy solutions that would facilitate the reintegration of migrants upon return to their countries of origin. The issue of ensuring the portability of pensions and access to social services was also raised. Many participants felt that the returning migrant could be an agent of development, provided that policies in the countries of origin facilitated the transfer of funds, access to loans and the setting up of small businesses.

The President: The summary of the discussions in round table 4 will be presented at a later stage.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the debate for this afternoon, I would like to inform members that there are still 59 speakers remaining to be heard. As I mentioned yesterday, we have to conclude the High-level Dialogue at the end of this meeting. I therefore appeal again to members to make their statements as concise as possible by summarizing them and circulating the full text.

I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Hassan Muhammad Lawal, Minister for Labour and Productivity of Nigeria.

Mr. Lawal (Nigeria): We would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session and to assure you of our readiness to cooperate with you to make your tenure a success. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his staff for the elaborate report (A/60/871) prepared for our deliberations. Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

International migration is an age-old phenomenon which, over the ages, has seen people of all colours and creeds move around the world for various reasons. Without a doubt, migration has enormous benefits and can be a potent force for development. But its challenges are equally enormous. Against this background, Nigeria is convinced that better-managed migration can bring win-win benefits to all countries.

The asymmetries in the material wealth of countries and the demand for cheap labour in industrialized countries, coupled with unemployment and poverty, are some of the factors that propel international migration.

While each country has the right to determine its migration policies, the exploitation, maltreatment, forceful repatriation and other dehumanizing treatment of migrants who are asylum-seekers — including their placement in concentration-style camps — prevalent in some countries as measures to manage migration are indefensible in the twenty-first century. The international community must therefore resist the temptation to build thick walls of exclusion or resort to xenophobia or other forms of discrimination under the pretext of measures to ensure national security.

Rather, we should work collectively to find practicable and dignifying solutions to the problems associated with migration. Nigeria is particularly concerned about the degrading treatment of migrants, in particular those who belong to vulnerable groups, and calls on States to fulfil their labour and human rights obligations to migrants, for that is the essence of development, as all people aspire to better standards of life in greater freedom.

In Nigeria's view, specific policy measures to consider in this Dialogue should include capacity-building, especially in African countries; the mobilization of national populations in the diaspora; the cheaper, safer and faster transfer of remittances; the sharing of more information on remittances; and the integration of migration issues into national development strategies. Other measures that need to be put in place to support the achievement of national development strategies include the speedy conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda, the resolution of the external debt crisis, the provision of new and additional resources, global cooperation to fight corruption and terrorism and a greater voice and participation for developing countries in decision-making in international financial and trading institutions.

In Nigeria, we have adopted a National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy as a framework to eradicate poverty, promote wealth creation and guarantee lasting prosperity for all Nigerians. Furthermore, Nigeria is working vigorously to achieve the goals and targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Cognizant of the importance of migration, the Government has established institutions to deal with the phenomenon, while three Special Assistants have been appointed to advise the President on diaspora matters, human trafficking and child labour, as well as on migration and humanitarian affairs.

Nigeria supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a consultative forum to complement coherent and well-coordinated migration strategies at all levels. We believe that the forum would provide a venue for States and other relevant stakeholders to continue the dialogue on migration in the absence of institutional arrangements within the United Nations system. Nigeria looks forward to the first meeting of the forum. Nigeria appreciates and commends the role of the International Labour Organization in providing an international standard for the protection of migrants. We also commend the International Organization for Migration for having raised awareness of the positive role that international migration and migrants can play in the economic, social and cultural development of countries.

Finally, we call for more international cooperation on migration management.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Walter Fust, Director-General of the Swiss Development Corporation of Switzerland.

Mr. Fust (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Migration is something that has always existed; it will continue to bring States together as we endeavour to manage it and to prevent illegal or undesirable forms of the phenomenon. We believe, therefore, that our efforts should result in the creation of a true partnership among States, international organizations and civil society, so that we are able to manage migration in a manner that is equitable, fair and transparent, in a spirit of mutual responsibility. In that context, we must first and foremost analyse the true causes of migration, inter alia, poverty, lack of prospects for the future, poor governance, insecurity, the violation of human rights and armed conflict.

We urgently need to develop instruments to enable us to maximize the positive effects of migration while minimizing the negative effects. Such considerations inspired Switzerland to launch the Berne Initiative, a process aimed at the development of an international agenda for migration management. As a process, the Berne Initiative enables Governments from all regions to share their various policy priorities, as well as to set out their long-term interests in the domain of migration, with a view to arriving at a common approach based on cooperation, comprehensiveness, balance and predictability.

The report of the Global Commission on International Migration, published in October 2005, clearly set out the ideal situation: migration should be a matter of choice, not of necessity. Indeed, there are far too many men and women who leave their homes and families as a result of circumstances that they cannot control.

We have a duty to pay more attention to the causes of migration and to prevention. In order to do so, we must together focus on instruments geared towards improving living conditions in countries of origin. Switzerland is committed to that goal and intends, at the international level, to pursue its commitment to fostering human security, promoting peace and enhancing respect for international law and human rights.

Similarly, Switzerland's cooperation is strategically oriented towards obtaining results that contribute to the stabilization of political, economic and social situations in countries of origin.

Development cooperation projects must do more to create a sufficient number of stable employment opportunities in developing countries, while emphasizing the great importance of savings and credit schemes. In addition, experience has taught us that the entrepreneurial capacity of women has been vastly underestimated. It is evident that we are dealing here with something that has enormous potential for promoting local economies in a sustainable manner.

Another approach to be further explored is the possibility of exploiting the synergies between migration and development. The remittances that migrants send back to their countries of origin amount to close to $200 billion per year, including transfers between industrialized countries. Notwithstanding the fact that these are, indeed, private funds, we can and should seek out the potential synergies between these major financial flows and official development cooperation. These remittances, however, are no substitute for official development assistance.

Our task is to improve the effectiveness of such transfers by lowering their cost and by ensuring that transfer procedures are secure, legal and exempt from additional taxes, while endeavouring to enhance these funds' impact on development. In this regard, Switzerland applauds the efforts made by multilateral banks, bilateral agencies and other organizations operating in this area and encourages all partners to share their experiences. We encourage States, international organizations and international financial institutions to integrate the issue of migration into their national poverty-reduction strategies and their regional policies.

We believe also that macroeconomic policies, when established, should facilitate international and national investment, including by diasporas, so that our actions unfold in a spirit of genuine partnership.

Switzerland believes that the social integration of migrants takes place primarily by way of participation in the labour market and through education. For that reason, Switzerland advocates policies aimed at improving the status of migrant workers, their active integration into the workforce, vocational training for young people, a reduction in unemployment and the

taking of effective measures against illegal or clandestine employment.

We should spare no effort in combating the most inhuman form of forced migration, namely trafficking in human beings. It is our duty, therefore, to provide the victims — children, women and men — with enhanced support in terms of protection and assistance. Neither should it be forgotten that the insecurity and lack of protection to which migrants are exposed tends to put in danger particularly the elderly, the sick and the handicapped. Women and children, too, are also among the most vulnerable. Sadly, however, all this represents only the tip of the iceberg.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Richard Fadden, Deputy Minister, Citizenship and Immigration of Canada.

Mr. Fadden (Canada): The decision to hold the High-level Dialogue is a reflection of the broader perspective that States and experts are increasingly adopting in their consideration of issues related to immigration.

It has been 12 years since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Canada continues to believe that chapter 10 of the ICPD Programme of Action provides an important guide for global cooperation on issues related to migration. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a growing sophistication in the way migration is treated. Linkages between migration and other areas of public policy are being explored in greater depth, an approach that Canada finds valuable.

While it has become commonplace to talk of the impact that globalization is having on all parts of the world, it would be a mistake to suggest that globalization affects all parts of the world in the same way, or that each country's response to globalization needs to be — or even can be — the same. Although there is much to be learned from sharing approaches and experiences concerning migration, solutions need to be tailored to local conditions to be effective. In that regard, the notion of sharing "best practices" requires refinement. Not everything can be systematized into a global approach.

The High-level Dialogue brings together many voices from the worlds of migration and development: policymakers from developed and developing countries; international organizations; civil society; and the United Nations system. Each has something valuable to add to the discussion, and, as we move forward, we need to ensure that each of these voices is given the opportunity to develop and to contribute.

To anchor the discussion within the realities of policymaking, however, Canada believes that this process should begin as a dialogue between States. As it evolves, the dialogue — while remaining under the leadership of States — should facilitate links with interested stakeholders.

As the Secretary-General's Special Representative has said on a number of occasions, for progress to be made on this issue, the various stakeholders need to approach these discussions in a constructive and open way.

Governments cannot and should not work in isolation. Yet at the same time, it is important that States take the opportunity to reflect upon and refine their own perspectives in order to engage constructively with others. Canada supports consideration of appropriate mechanisms for civil society and the newly created Global Migration Group to provide input into any ongoing discussions that States may decide to undertake.

In considering any ongoing process that might emerge from the High-level Dialogue, Canada would encourage States to take the following into account.

An ongoing process should add value to international discussions rather than duplicate what is already taking place or what could occur within existing mechanisms. This new dialogue should take place as a standalone forum and not as part of the United Nations system and its related institutions. Clearly defined links to the United Nations, possibly through the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, should be developed. The process should focus on developing an understanding of substantive issues rather than on negotiating texts for resolutions or declarations. Finally, States should take the leadership role, as they are responsible for turning ideas into concrete policy.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Sauerbrey, Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugee and Migration Affairs of the United States.

Ms. Sauerbrey (United States of America): The United States is pleased to participate in this event.

which provides the opportunity for States Members of the United Nations to discuss our collective experiences on migration and development.

The issue of immigration is very close to America's heart. It goes to the very core of who we are as a people and what we believe in as a country: hard work, opportunity, rule of law, freedom, tolerance and liberty. Let there be no confusion: the United States' commitment to promoting orderly migration as a positive development for all nations is firm and undiminished by the challenges of the post-9/11 world.

Last year alone, over 1 million foreign nationals received permanent legal residence in the United States. America hosts approximately 20 per cent of the world's migrants, coming to us from every corner of the globe. Last year we resettled over half of the world's refugees — perhaps the most vulnerable migrants.

All countries of the United Nations family have shared with us their people, their culture and their faiths, representing the magnificent glory and range and reach of God's human creation. So when America looks in the mirror, it is them that we see.

The United States takes the issue of migration very seriously. We are deeply and sincerely committed to promoting legal, orderly and humane migration as an engine for economic growth and prosperity for all countries. We are also, without hesitation, fully committed to respect for the human dignity and human rights of migrants. On these points, there should be no doubt.

My country approaches the subject of migration with humility. Through more than 200 years of experience, we have learned that the political, economic and human complexities of this phenomenon defy easy answers. Even in the eighteenth century, our founding fathers debated the appropriate scope of immigration to the United States. They mistakenly feared that foreign influences would somehow undermine America's democratic principles.

The United States recognizes that there are negative aspects of migration, such as human trafficking and smuggling, and we are committed to confronting those challenges. Our national conversation on migration continues today. Americans understand the need to work through these hard issues as a nation. We offer ourselves as an example, and perhaps a reassurance, to others who are struggling with immigration as a relatively new topic.

Americans are a practical people when it comes to immigration. This national preference for the pragmatic and the concrete, coupled with an unwavering commitment to migration as a positive phenomenon, shapes how the United States fosters international cooperation in this realm. In our experience, migration relationships work best between neighbours and neighbourhoods, near and far, where there are common interests and concerns that lead to tangible outcomes. We are not interested in grand and ponderous global dialogues simply because we have seen the inherent weakness that results from their size and scope. They lumber under the great weight of rounds and rounds of conversation, far removed from immediate problems and realistic solutions.

The United States welcomes the work of the Global Migration Group, which will enhance the ability of the United Nations system and the International Organization for Migration to address the nexus between migration and development. We believe, however, that the international community, including the United Nations system, already has adequate capacity to address migration issues and that the creation of additional structures could hinder, not help, international goodwill and cooperation on these issues. Any consideration of United Nations-affiliated discussions must be fully vetted by the Member States in a transparent and open manner in keeping with the United Nations rules of procedure and out of respect for the traditions of this institution.

We continue to believe, as did our forefathers, that what binds Americans together is a shared belief in principles guaranteed under our Constitution. The United States expects immigrants to respect the fundamental rights and responsibilities that accompany residence and citizenship. We work as a society to build immigrants' appreciation for United States institutions, recognizing their personal connection to our shared American history as an immigrant nation.

Americans support the principle that immigrants, while fully integrating into their new communities, can also remain connected to their country of origin. One of the strongest links is remittances. These financial flows are a manifestation of migration's pains as well as its benefits. They represent enormous toil, sacrifice and the sorrow of separation from family and

community. Yet they also symbolize the profound love of those people and places left behind and the courage to follow one's dreams.

Both migrant sending and receiving countries have responsibility to maximize migration's benefits, including remittances. Remittances are private transfers of funds, which will have a greater overall impact on development in countries of origin when those countries undertake economic and social reforms that create an environment conducive to asset building, entrepreneurship and investment.

Immigrants come to the United States, as President Bush has said, not only to take, but to give. They come for a chance to work hard, to support their families and to rise in the world. While migration can be beneficial to sending and receiving countries as well as to migrants themselves, it is important to note that the decision to migrate should be made out of choice, not necessity. Countries of origin and destination must work together to make this a reality.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Kastriot Sulka, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Sulka (Albania): Albania welcomes the organization of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and believes that it will have a strong impact on future efforts and policies for the management of migration internationally. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/60/871), more than 191 million persons are international migrants — a fact that shows the huge dimensions of the phenomenon and its influence on international balances. As such, it cannot be considered to be a phenomenon of developed or developing countries alone.

The global policy on migration management for the benefit of both States and individuals is largely reflected in Albania. Since 1991, Albania has experienced significant flows of migration at a rate of up to 20 per cent of the total population. Albanian migrants are found mostly in the European Union, especially in the two neighbouring countries, Greece and Italy, but also in Germany, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. Until 2004, Albania was one of the main transit routes in South-East Europe towards the European Union. As a result, migration was a major concern not only for the country itself but also for its relations with the European Union and in particular with its neighbours.

I would like to share with you a new approach that the Government of Albania has proclaimed recently: "Albania: 1 Euro", aimed at attracting investors in poor areas with high unemployment rates. The initiative is addressed in particular at the diaspora and emigrants, as the need for their contribution is high, taking in consideration that they bring with them not only financial capital but also human capital. In this way, they share with the community a new mentality, culture and technological advancements. As noted in paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report,

> "After working in Greece, Albanians bring home new agricultural skills that enable them to increase production. By promoting the exchange of experience and helping build partnerships, the international community can do much to increase and to spread these positive effects of migration on development."

While migration creates possibilities for migrants to have a better life and contributes to the countries of both origin and destination, it has a negative impact as a result of the emigration of highly skilled workers and the phenomenon of brain drain.

Albania is trying to reverse the trend: from brain drain to brain gain, by introducing strategies for attracting highly skilled workers and excellent students who have studied abroad to contribute effectively to Albania. The Albanian Government supports and welcomes cooperation with civil society and student organizations that provide financial incentives for the highly skilled and students to return.

The United Nations Development Programme is supporting an initiative of the Albanian Government through the Brain Gain programme, which seeks to maximize the role of migrants and the diaspora in academia, public administration and business. This programme supports the Albanian Government's efforts to create the conditions and incentive structure required for the engagement of the diaspora in Albania's development.

Albania has seen that without the support and expertise of specialized international agencies in the field, in particular the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations, the World Bank,

UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Union, and without cooperation among countries, it is difficult to deal coherently with migration. Experience shows us that without close cooperation between countries of destination and those of origin it is impossible to fight illegal migration and manage migration for the benefit of all. Albania agrees that in framing policies or establishing structures, the perspective of emigrants and civil society should be taken into consideration, and not only that of the countries of origin and destination. We believe that the results of this debate will be followed by concrete actions, resulting in better management of migration internationally.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hassan Ibrahim Al-Muhannadi, Director for Social Planning Management of the Planning Council of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Muhannadi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the State of Qatar to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that your wisdom and experience will guide the work of the Assembly towards success. I would like also to thank the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to shed light on the question of global migration and development, and for his exhaustive report (A/60/871).

The phenomenon of migration goes far back in time. Its pace has, however, increased in our era because of globalization and its socio-economic impacts and the significant progress in communications and transportation. The current status of migration requires serious attention if we are to harness it to further the interests of individuals and nations. Organizing this global Dialogue is merely a step towards finding effective means to ensure the protection of migrants, as well as of countries of origin and destination. The State of Qatar welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a global consultative forum on migration, and we appreciate Belgium's offer to host its first meeting.

The State of Qatar hosts many migrant workers from many nations. They work side by side with citizens of Qatar, promoting the development of our nation's economy, which is now one of the world's fastest growing. The State of Qatar has always been proud of the contributions made by migrant labour to its robust economic growth and its tireless efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Moreover, the State of Qatar is engaging in close and continuous cooperation with countries of origin. For example, it has concluded bilateral agreements regulating the employment of migrants and identifying the role of public authorities in countries of origin and destination. These agreements require that such workers be employed under labour contracts that clearly spell out the rights and obligations of both employees and employers. The contracts are certified by officials of both countries to prevent any abuse of migrant workers; they also define procedures for settling disputes between employees and employers, enable migrant workers to fully exercise their right to send remittances to their countries of origin and set out rules for paid vacations and other leave.

Our Government has created a tolerant social environment that enables migrant workers to freely practice their religion and maintain their own culture. The State of Qatar also provides migrant workers with basic rights and benefits, including education, health care and social protection.

Another example of Qatar's interest in its migrant workers is its invitation to all members of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council to participate in the forum on migrant workers to be held in Doha in April 2007. The State of Qatar pays particular attention to protecting the rights of migrant workers in accordance with its laws and the contracts that are concluded with them and certified by the countries of origin. In that regard, I wish to reiterate that the State of Qatar honours its commitments under the contracts concluded with it and strictly abides by the relevant international agreements and treaties.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that this Dialogue will be fully successful in promoting progress and well-being in our nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yannis Valinakis, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Valinakis (Greece): On behalf of the Greek Government, I would like to stress the importance of the organization by the United Nations of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

It was in May 2003, during the Greek presidency of the European Union (EU), that the European Council adopted, for the first time, Conclusions on migration and development, containing a series of concrete measures and items for further elaboration by community organizations and member States. Since then, much has been done in the framework of EU action related to the interrelationship between migration and development, and migration has rightly been placed on our development agenda.

The links between migration and development are complex and need further study. It appears that migration, when managed effectively, can have a substantial positive impact for both countries of destination and countries of origin.

The European Council, in its Conclusions of 15-16 December 2005, underlined the need for a balanced, global and coherent approach to cooperation with third countries, utilizing the benefits of legal migration and covering policies to combat illegal immigration. It recalled that migration issues are a central element in the relations of the Union and its member States with third countries.

The EU commitment to support the development efforts of countries of origin and transit is also part of a long-term process aimed at responding to the opportunities and challenges of migration. In that regard, the European Council recognized the importance of addressing the root causes of migration — for example, through the eradication of poverty in countries and regions of origin, good governance and the protection of human rights. We fully subscribe to those basic policy principles.

In the same vein, we consider the Rabat EU-Africa Ministerial Conference, held in July 2006, to be a fine paradigm for our relations with a basic group of countries of origin and transit. We believe that it will assist significantly in improving ways to communicate and cooperate with African partners.

Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to address the phenomenon of illegal migration jointly, appropriately and effectively. The fight against illegal migration is an incessant struggle that is taking place from West Africa and the Canary Islands, across the Mediterranean to the Aegean Sea and the Middle East. Illegal migration has recently taken on huge and uncontrollable proportions. Given the fact that Greece's coastline extends more than 16,000 kilometres, combating all forms of illegal migration is a declared high priority of the Greek Government.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate our view that the High-level Dialogue should be the beginning of a new global approach to migration in its various forms. It should thus focus on initiating broad and thorough discussion on the relevant issues and on lessons learned about the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize the development benefits of migration and to minimize its negative impacts.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Mari Pedak, Director-General of the Citizenship and Migration Board of Estonia.

Mrs. Pedak (Estonia): The general position of the European Union (EU) was outlined in the statement of its presidency. Therefore, as the representative of a member of the EU, I will not repeat what has already been said, but rather focus on a number of main aspects that are of great importance to Estonia.

Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen defined development as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. That includes both social and economic arrangements and political and civil rights. Although migration is an increasingly complex phenomenon in our globalizing world, its primary cause remains the disparities that exist with regard to the freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Therefore, I would like to stress the need to address the root causes of migration. They encompass conflict, poverty, famine, disease, lack of employment opportunities, trade barriers, lack of rule of law and poor governance. Most of those causes are primarily of man-made origin.

These are significant barriers to freedom that need to be abolished in order to eliminate conditions that compel people to leave their country. It goes without saying, that we, as States, are primarily responsible for creating an environment conducive to development. Naturally, one element of that environment would be the efficient and purposeful utilization of the remittances of migrants for further development, such as for education, investment and microcredit. That would benefit both sending and receiving societies. Those are some of the reasons that issues related to international migration must become an integral part of the development agenda. Likewise,

development issues should be recognized as important elements of migration policy.

The Secretary-General has stressed the importance of respecting the rights of migrants in order to realize fully the benefits of international migration. He also has stressed the obligation to observe the laws and regulations of the host State. It is almost a truism that education plays a key role in personal development and significantly expands individuals' opportunities and their capacity to live a happy life.

Former Estonian President Lennart Meri has said that a lack of language skills creates lawlessness. Only by understanding the language will we understand the laws and thus, effectively, our rights and obligations. Learning the local language and respecting the local culture opens a window of opportunity to an immigrant to effectively operate in the host society as a subject and not as an object. It also allows him or her to increase his or her competitiveness in the labour market, as well as to obtain new skills and other assets for development. To effectively support this process, we need to continue local introductory and integration programmes, also bearing in mind that integration is a two-way street and that citizens of receiving nations must also be educated.

Last but not least, for successful integration we all — both sending and receiving States — must avoid using migrants for domestic ideological purposes. We must not make these people instruments of our domestic policy.

We truly hope that this Dialogue on International Migration and Development will continue to play a significant global role in this respect.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Zamora Rodríguez, Director of Consular Affairs and Cubans Living Abroad of Cuba.

Mr. Zamora Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Madam, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly and to express my delegation's will and commitment to continue working constructively with you. My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the same time we would like to express some thoughts on this topic.

The current phenomenon of international migration is a consequence of the present world order imposed by the developed world. The increasing differences between the rich countries and the huge underdeveloped and poor areas of the planet are a consequence of neo-liberal globalization. Millions of human beings see no alternative for their future other than to migrate towards the developed economies of the first world. Changing this landscape is a challenge that we all must address, for its consequences affect both rich and poor countries. It is a matter of urgency to address the current phenomenon of migration, and it is appropriate to include the issue in development policies.

Maintaining the status quo will only serve to increase the pressure of masses of migrants coming from impoverished areas of the planet besieging the borders of the developed world. This flood cannot be stopped by criminalizing migration, erecting massive walls at the borders or creating administrative or even military barriers.

We cannot accept approaches aimed at managing and administering migration flows to meet the needs of the developed world. It is essential to change the current situation of underdevelopment and poverty in a large part of the planet so that migration meets the true needs and aspirations of individuals who wish to settle in another country. Development is the only way to balance migration flows in the world of the future.

The planet's natural resources are being exploited for the benefit of the developed countries. In today's globalized economy, the exploitation of human resources is ever increasing. An unjust international migration order has been created to serve the richest and most powerful countries, which receive skilled labour, steal the best brains and talent, and in return want our countries to become their border guards, to stop irregular migration.

For example, in Latin America every year we train 1.2 million university graduates, at a cost of at least $20,000 each. Of these, 240,000 — that is, 20 per cent — are stolen away to work and do research in the rich nations, which offer them conditions that our impoverished nations, cannot guarantee them, and we receive no compensation whatsoever. They sell us remittances as a panacea for development — remittances that are the fruit of the migrants' sacrifices — while constantly reducing their commitments and their official development assistance.

It is time to rectify this. Sincere cooperation is required to contribute to the development of the vast poor areas of the planet. Without steadfast political will, it will not be possible to solve the problem. However, today's facts call into question the existence of that political will on the part of the industrialized world.

The policy of blockade and aggression against my country is one example of the aforementioned problem. The so-called Cuban Adjustment Act allows any Cuban who arrives on United States territory to take up residence, no matter the means and procedures used. This act has encouraged illegal migration and alien smuggling. It contradicts the bilateral migration agreement, which establishes the obligation to ensure legal, safe and orderly migration. Moreover, the United States authorities show no inclination to investigate and punish organized crime that benefits from alien smuggling.

Moreover, Cubans resident in the United States are the only group of migrants that is restricted in terms of visiting and helping their relatives in their country of origin, as a result of the regulations issued by the host country. This situation has become crueller since the United States Government's May 2004 adoption of measures further restricting travel and remittances on the basis of an absurd and offensive limitation of the concept of family. Today, a son can visit his mother only once every three years, even if she is dying.

Increasing and unsustainable military expenditures constitute another example of the lack of will regarding development cooperation. What can justify the vast and growing amounts spent on the development of increasingly deadly and sophisticated weapons, which are shown by the current wars to be aimed precisely at the poor countries and to cause significant displacements of people? The reduction of military spending and its investment in development would be a demonstration of the genuine will to address the issue of development, and to help change the current situation.

The developed world has received a substantial contribution from migrants to its current standard of living, while migrants are the victims of economic, cultural and social discrimination. The developed world can be said to have contracted a debt with the migrants for those contributions. A way to pay it back would be to cancel the external debt of the source countries.

The walls and barriers being built today can hold back migration, but they do not solve the causes of the present and continuing forced migration of millions of human beings. If this High-level Dialogue raises greater awareness of the need to seek solutions that will address the structural causes of international migration, then it will have been worthwhile for the Secretary-General to have convened it; but if we confine ourselves to migratory flow management formulas, we shall at best be postponing the impending crisis to which the phenomenon is leading.

The beneficiaries of the current world order should reflect on this issue — if not with generosity, at least with intelligence and common sense. Solutions are urgently needed. It is better to arrive at them between us all through cooperation.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Christian Wenaweser, chairman of the delegation of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): International migrants numbering 191 million constitute an important factor in the global economy. Their decision to migrate has, however, first and foremost an impact on local communities, in countries of origin as well as in countries of destination. And the impact is not only an economic one. The report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871) illustrates that migration also generates far-reaching social, cultural and political consequences.

The challenges of governing international migration are radically different from those involved in managing the movements of inanimate objects such as goods, capital or information. Co-development through international migration should therefore be understood and discussed as a people-centred process of which many aspects cannot be measured in purely economic terms. Promotion of a people-centred process would help in responding to the many differences in global migration patterns and to local conditions of sending and receiving societies. It would also ensure a human rights approach in our policymaking at the local, national and international levels.

Lack of the rule of law and low levels of human security, together with underdevelopment, are often at the origin of the desire to search for a better future abroad. Coupled with misinformation on the

possibilities and limitations of migration, such situations may lead to the exploitation of migrants and to violations of their human rights.

States have a responsibility to properly inform people about the conditions of regular migration. They also have the obligation to raise awareness of the positive contributions of migrants to society, in order to counter racism, xenophobia and discrimination, and they have to take firm action against any elements in society that seek to abuse, intimidate or exploit migrants.

Mr. Awaluddin (Indonesia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Migrants who deliberately challenge the rule of law or the human rights of others must, for their part, expect States to take measures against them. Ensuring the rule of law with full respect for human rights in countries of origin and destination must be an essential element of any international and national migration policy. Rule of law and human rights are the basis for good governance of international migration, which is beneficial for the sustainable co-development of all countries and for the migrants themselves.

While migration is a global phenomenon, its forms and manifestations vary from region to region, as does its impact on individual countries. The experience of small countries shows that their ability to cope with the challenges of migration is more likely to be stretched. Emigration of highly educated persons tends to affect small countries earlier because their pool of human resources is limited. Similarly, the economies of many small developing States depend to a high degree on remittances. On the receiving side, it is often the small countries which account for the highest percentage of migrants living or working in their jurisdiction. The impact of large cross-border movements of persons tends to be more directly felt in small communities.

As a small State, Liechtenstein has been seeking to balance economic necessities with the social challenges of migration. With a population of roughly 35,000 persons and 34 per cent non-Liechtenstein nationals residing in the country, Liechtenstein is home to people from about 90 different countries. One of the priorities of Government policy lies in the promotion of integration through the provision of targeted services for migrants, to learn the national language. Those services have proven especially helpful for the integration of women migrants and their young children. Many other measures are currently under discussion to further promote integration, which is based on the cooperation of both sides — the receiving and the migrant communities.

In its development cooperation, Liechtenstein has been placing special emphasis on the development of rural areas in small developing countries. The projects it has been financing seek to improve the livelihoods of people outside their countries. Political and financial investments in integration measures, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as development cooperation with small countries, are the two pillars of sound migration policy. Liechtenstein will accordingly continue to contribute to international efforts to realize the full potential of migration, for the co-development of countries and migrants alike.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Alberto Sepúlveda, Director of Consular and Migration Affairs of Chile.

Mr. Sepúlveda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to hold this High-level Dialogue on the highly important topic of international migration and development. We are confident that this initiative will place that social and economic phenomenon, involving almost 200 million people in the world, at the centre of the United Nations agenda.

Allow me to point out that the President of Chile, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, also underwent the difficult experience of being a migrant, when in the mid-1970s, owing to political reasons, she had to leave her country. Consequently, she is closely acquainted with the adversities and insecurities that come of leaving behind homeland and loved ones.

The position of Chile on the key subject of migration is basically reflected in the Declaration of Asunción, adopted at the VIth South American Conference on Migration, held in May 2006, and in the Declaration of Santiago on Migration Principles, agreed upon at the Meeting of Ministers of the Interior of the Common Market of the South and Associate States, held in May 2004.

One of the central themes of this debate should be the developmental dimension of migration, and particularly its contribution to poverty reduction. The main challenge facing us is the process of making

international migration a positive force for the comprehensive and harmonious development of our peoples.

To that end, we must see how the sizeable resources created by remittances can be channelled towards development objectives that benefit migrants and their families. Chile accordingly considers that the cost of remittance transfers should be reduced, that remittance flows should be facilitated and that development-oriented investments in recipient countries should be encouraged, supplementing and complementing official development assistance.

In addition, we share, along with other Latin American and Caribbean States, the concern about the rights of migrants and their families. In that spirit, Chile last year ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. We reaffirm our total commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrant men, women and children, regardless of their legal status, beliefs, religion or ethnicity, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We believe that this High-level Dialogue should mark the beginning in the Organization of a process of reflection and ongoing consultation on international migration. Nevertheless, we believe that this exercise should not lead to the establishment of a new body within the United Nations, nor should it duplicate the functions of existing bodies and mechanisms.

Our country is the product of the integration and mixture of indigenous populations with various waves of European and Arab migrants. As a result of economic developments in recent decades in our country, Chile has now become a country of destination for migrants. As a host country, we have endeavoured at this time to formulate and implement a policy seeking to modernize the management of migration, principally by improving the living conditions of foreigners, so that their establishment and integration in the country can benefit all concerned.

The migration policy of Chile is based on the following principles: guarantees of the right of residence and freedom of movement, guarantees of freedom of thought and conscience, access to residence on a basis of equality, access to justice as a right of all immigrants, social protection of immigrants, guarantees of the labour rights of foreign workers in Chile, non-discrimination and family reunification.

At the same time, as a country of origin, we have a responsibility towards Chilean migrants residing abroad. As a crucial step towards meeting that responsibility, in 2003 and 2004 our country carried out its first voluntary census of Chileans residing abroad. That entailed arduous but valuable work on the five continents and in some 100 countries. That effort helped to strengthen links between Chilean society and the community of Chileans abroad.

We have been able to confirm, in the course of these two days, that there is a significant and expanding awareness in the international community regarding the realities of migration, including migrant rights and the benefits they bring to development and to poverty relief in the world.

We hope that this meeting will constitute a real and decisive milestone on the road to progress in dealing with this important social phenomenon specific to our age, which we must decisively address.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ewald Limon, Chairman of the delegation of Suriname.

Mr. Limon (Suriname): Globalization, advances in communications and transportation, underdevelopment, lack of opportunity and poverty, have all contributed to the increase in the flow of migrants. We share the view that there is a need for effective management of international migration. For such management to be achieved, all stakeholders must be involved and all root causes must be examined. My delegation therefore welcomes the convening of this High-level Dialogue and considers it an excellent opportunity to exchange views at the global level.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Government of Suriname agrees that international migration should be managed in a manner that contributes to the development efforts of States. A process of consultation and an exchange of views, including best practices on the various aspects of international migration, are therefore needed. The consultations on co-development and the maximization of the impact of remittances on the development process are of special interest to my delegation.

Suriname believes that there is need for a steady flow of skilled human resources to meet the nation's development objectives. Therefore, the Dialogue should discuss and explore possible arrangements to compensate for the loss of skilled personnel between the receiving States and States of origin, given the high cost of training human resources. In addition, the advantages of the brain gain and brain circulation arrangements could be examined. The Dialogue could also examine the use of remittances for economic investment and social advancement, for education and health services and for housing purposes, as well as assisting in analysing financial services, attracting savings for, and investment in, those areas.

With regard to international migration, Suriname is engaged in a process of evaluation at the national level, and consultation and exchange of views at the regional level, in order to strengthen our migration policy. We are convinced of the need for international migration to evolve within a framework that guarantees full respect for human rights.

Among our commitments at the national level are actions to ensure that migration takes place within a legal framework and that trafficking in persons is more effectively countered. At the core of these actions is the establishment of a special police unit responsible for the combating of human trafficking and related crimes. In addition, an information campaign concerning trafficking in persons and related crimes was launched, and policy decisions have been taken that will guarantee the safe return of victims of trafficking to their countries of origin.

Suriname values the contribution and initiatives of the various regional organizations and institutions with regard to the manifold aspects of international migration. We are therefore actively participating in that process.

At the regional level, consultations are ongoing within the framework of the African, Caribbean and Pacific groups of States; the South American consultation mechanism; and the Caribbean Community. This dialogue can significantly contribute to discussions on improving coherence on migration policy, foster dialogue between sending and receiving States, support regional consultative processes and strengthen coherence and coordination among agencies at all levels.

Hence we consider this meeting to be the start of a process at the global level that complements consultations and actions at the regional and bilateral level with regard to international migration. We therefore support the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a consultative forum on migration and development issues.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Sevilla Somoza, chairman of the delegation of Nicaragua.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to associate ourselves with the statement made by the delegation of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group and with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77.

Nicaragua welcomes this High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development and deems it particularly timely and relevant, as these two issues should be dealt with in a comprehensive and integrated manner. We recognize that the issue of migration involves all sectors of Government, and we believe also that account should be taken of the experiences and views of the relevant non-governmental sectors, including diaspora associations, civil society and the private sector.

We welcome the fact that this dialogue is multidimensional and is launching a quest for the best way to ensure that migration contributes to development. Indeed, the United Nations is the forum best suited to this exchange of ideas and experiences. Since migration is a global phenomenon that occurs not only between pairs of countries or within one single region, but from and to all parts of the world, we must consider it collectively.

We very much welcome, as a follow-up to this High-level Dialogue and in order to deal in greater depth with the broad subject of migration and development, the recommendation of the Secretary-General to establish a consultative forum led by States and open to the 192 States Members of the United Nations. Such a forum would offer Governments a venue to discuss issues related to international migration and development in a systematic and comprehensive way.

The Government of Nicaragua attaches high priority to the combat against trafficking in human

beings. To that end, in February 2004 we formed a National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons, with the participation of several related institutions. They are making significant progress in fighting this scourge at the national and regional levels, with a firm commitment to protecting human rights.

The programme to fight trafficking in persons launched by the Government of Nicaragua together with the International Orgaqnization for Migration (IOM) and members of the national coalition against trafficking in persons is holding regular working sessions with a view to drafting a repatriation protocol that sets out administrative and legal guidelines in that respect that are based on daily experience. It also aims to take, along with the participants, concrete actions and steps in the context of the various components of the process: research, repatriation, assistance, and legalization of the system. The result will be the drafting at the national level of the protocol for the return of boys, girls and adolescents victims of human trafficking, which is in the final stages of ratification.

Our Government also participated in the technical meeting held in Guatemala on 9 and 10 March to consider the possibility of elaborating a regional protocol that would include guidelines for the repatriation of victims of trafficking and vulnerable populations. The outcome of that meeting yielded a draft setting out regional guidelines for providing special protection to boys, girls and adolescents who are victims of trafficking.

We are aware of the technical limitations to our work, but experience has shown that the political and personal will of all involved with the issue is fundamental to the eradication of this social scourge. That is why we have been developing a new culture of citizenship, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the principle of shared responsibility between the State, the family and society in guaranteeing human rights, in particular those of children and of adolescents.

The efforts that have been undertaken by the various departments of the Ministry of the Interior responsible for the national police, migration, immigration, coexistence and citizens' security are showing positive results among the general population as well as the student population in terms of prevention and detection. However, since the crime of trafficking is very complex and has various manifestations, it would be better addressed if certain State institutions and national and international non-governmental organizations with experience in this area were able better to coordinate their work within the National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons, so that we could more effectively optimize and distribute the resources available.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ali Hachani, chairman of the delegation of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I should like to endorse the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This important debate is the first high-level event of the United Nations entirely devoted to migration and development. It is the outcome of a long process of coordination and reflection undertaken at both the international and regional levels.

In that framework, I should like in particular to mention the Euro-African conference on Migration and Development, held at Rabat on 10 and 11 July 2006, whose conclusions, namely the Declaration and Action Plan, encompass a broad range of measures relating to migration and development, including the establishment of financial mechanisms to promote co-development, as well as issues relating to legal migration, and judicial and police cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration.

Increased international interest in questions of migration, of which this High-level Dialogue is a consequence, shows that now more than ever migration is a cross-cutting issue in all societies, with economic, political and cultural aspects closely linked to development. Globalization especially has brought this to the foreground. Migration can no longer be dealt with on a short-term basis or unilaterally, but as part of a cooperative plan, for the process of migration requires coordinated, multidimensional responses.

Because of increased disparities in development, unbalanced changes in population growth and the multiplication of conflicts, there is a clear trend of increased migratory flows, which must be taken into account in the formulation and implementation of migration policies. Thus migration, which is much more a necessity than a choice, should be dealt with comprehensively and incorporated into programmes for economic development and cooperation among States.

It is inconceivable that at a time when borders are opening to the flow of trade, services and capital, they are increasingly closed to the flow of persons. This inevitably leads to clandestine migration and all that that implies in terms of risks to individuals and to society in general.

Migration ought not to be a threat, we believe; it should be a factor for mutual enrichment, both socio-economically and in terms of culture. It is an appropriate alternative response to the needs of the labour market in industrialized countries and an essential, complementary and rewarding component in various areas of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. International events over the past few years give the issue of migration political, economic, social and cultural importance and confirm the close interdependence between changes in both countries of origin and countries of destination, involving the responsibilities of all parties.

I would like to stress that collaborative management of migration, based on a comprehensive approach that conforms with and respects the interest of the different countries, has become one of the major challenges that the international community must take up at the beginning of this millennium in order to establish a balance between the imperatives of development and the constraints of globalization.

It is also of paramount importance that we highlight the promotion of the transfer of new technologies and the exchange of skills in order to strengthen the economies of the countries of origin and of destination through increased international, bilateral and triangular development cooperation as well as decentralized cooperation between local institutions and development agencies.

My delegation endorses the finding that financial flows from immigrants are poorly or little used, owing to high transfer costs. It is necessary to discuss measures to decrease transfer costs and thus provide additional resources for financing development. However, remittances sent by migrant workers cannot be considered as and made part of international financing for development, not can they substitute for it. Remittances are fluctuating private resources, of a complementary nature.

My delegation shares the idea that the Millennium Development Goals process must discuss migration and development.

Given the increased interdependence of the two shores of the Mediterranean — a political and geographical area of which Tunisia is part — and the complexity of migratory movements, Tunisia has repeatedly appealed for the establishment of a constructive dialogue to promote the development of a sustainable and dynamic process that makes emigration one of the elements of economic cooperation, of equitable development and of cultural exchanges between the North and South of the Mediterranean, especially in the western region.

In that spirit, Tunisia is pleased that the first Ministerial Conference of the 5+5 Dialogue on Migration in the Western Mediterranean was held in Tunis on 16 and 17 October 2002. That conference unanimously adopted the Tunis Declaration, which represents a fundamental new step in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

I would also like to mention the positive evolution of the 5+5 Dialogue through the holding of annual ministerial meetings, which shows that the countries involved recognize the need to continue the dialogue, consultation and coordination in the area of migration. The Fifth Ministerial Conference, to be held in Madrid in November 2006, will be a new milestone in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

Tunisia will continue to attach appropriate importance to the questions of migration and to maintain to its partners that unilateral solutions and administrative and security measures do not necessarily lead to the effective and sustainable handling of the migration issue.

As His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has stated,

> "Migration today is not the simple search for employment and a source of income. It is also an essential aspect of the creation of wealth, a basis of stability and united co-development, and a decisive factor in enriching areas of mutual knowledge and rapprochement among nations."

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Guy Serieys, Chairman of the Delegation of France.

Mr. Serieys (France) (*spoke in French*): The global phenomenon of migration is in large part the result of inequalities in development between various regions of our planet. How can we forget that today

one fifth of the world's population enjoys four fifths of the world's wealth?

Dramatic and daily events that illustrate the vital need for mobility make us aware that the phenomena of migration cannot be dealt with without taking into consideration the development of the countries of the South. We must each, at our own level of responsibility, mobilize to re-examine our activities and efforts from that angle. The goals of development must remain the pillar of international cooperation. And for that, we must reinforce the instruments and means for combating poverty and promoting achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that we defined together. In that sense, human development, health and education, but also economic development, remain our priorities. If immigrants opt for exile, it is because the means for attaining those Goals are not being effectively implemented. Much too frequently, conflicts and insecurity motivate this choice.

If we meet here today — countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination — it is because we have become aware of the role that migrants play in the development of their countries of origin.

In order to make the most of that link, the Government of France recently adopted an inter-ministerial strategy on migration and development based on three aspects and which fully takes into account European initiatives on this issue.

First, we want to facilitate — through co-development projects that France has been implementing for several years — individual and collective initiatives by migrants in favour of their regions of origin through financing microprojects that promote local development and employment. These initiatives require a strong partnership with immigrant associations and with the authorities of partner countries. In this regard we include Morocco, Mali and Senegal in the first rank today.

The second aspect of our strategy concerns remittances by immigrants to their regions of origin. The transfer of savings is the most eloquent expression of the socio-economic tie between diasporas and their regions of origin. In order to promote the investment of savings in development, we back both a reduction in transfer costs by encouraging competition between banking institutions and support for immigrants in their projects. The creation of a development savings account should make it possible to exempt from taxes savings that are used in the productive sector.

Finally, we should act against the brain drain and loss of human resources, fostering North-South and South-South mobility. We want to associate the elites established in France with the development of their continent, notably at the level of training and skills transfer. We also want to take steps to facilitate the mobility of qualified people in the diaspora, namely, doctors, engineers, university staff and high-level personnel who reside in France and who could, with our help, participate in our cooperation programmes and thereby transmit their knowledge and skills to the countries of the South.

Our approach to the challenges of international migration and development can be neither exclusively bilateral nor exclusively regional. Migration routes change as globalization develops, and we must, therefore, facilitate the emergence of a multilateral approach that tends itself to the identification of practical means of intervention. The proper forum for pursuing this line of thinking is of course the United Nations, but care should be taken not to exclude those who are mainly concerned, namely, the migrants themselves.

We should pool our experiences. In that regard, the most recent Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development was, in our opinion, an essential stage in the definition of a North-South partnership aimed at providing a global and balanced approach to migration issues. We should also encourage the emergence of a system of effective exchange among Governments and international organizations working in these areas, be it at the level of objective analysis of the issues or at the level of programmes to be launched to meet the challenges that we face.

I have no doubt that our contributions to this High-level Dialogue will manage to shed light on these various questions, taking account of the variety of the situations and people concerned.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Julian Vila-Coma, chairman of the delegation of Andorra.

Mr. Vila-Coma (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Ms. Rashed

Al-Khalifa on her appointment as President of the General Assembly and, at the same time, to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report on international migration and development (A/60/871) and his recommendation to set up a global consultative forum on this issue. We firmly believe such a forum to be a fundamental tool for working constructively on this phenomenon, one of the most sensitive in today's world, taking into account the links that exist between international migration and development.

In that regard, Andorra also wishes to commend the initiative of the Government of Belgium, which has offered to host the first forum meeting on this topic in 2007.

Andorra, which has long been a country of origin for migrants, can testify to the changes that this phenomenon makes to all the different aspects of the life of a small country. Andorra, with an economy based essentially on tourism, trade and services, has not been untouched by this phenomenon. It underwent an important change at the end of the first half of the twentieth century when it went from being a country of origin to a country of destination.

The history of Andorra then became inseparable from the phenomenon of immigration, which triggered a process of development unprecedented in its history. Immigration took place within a legal framework that made it possible for the various demographic, economic, political and social factors involved in that transformation to be carefully tied in with our everyday life in order to create a sense of belonging to our community.

Moreover, upon the adoption of our new Constitution, political relations were facilitated between Andorra as a country of destination and the countries of origin within a legal framework that is more favourable to the integration of migrants, while allowing them to maintain links with their countries of origin.

Allow me to stress my country's interest in all the issues with which we are concerned here. Andorra selected the subject as the main topic for discussion at our twenty-third summer congress this year, in order to analyse the related challenges and opportunities in historical, political, legal, sociological and cultural terms.

Andorra supports all strategies based on the study of the phenomenon of migration in the context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, because we are convinced that only such an approach will yield positive results in that regard.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Choi Young-jin, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): Immigration echoes many of the aspects of globalization. It is indeed, a multidimensional and global phenomenon. With almost 200 million international emigrants in the world, it has the potential to reshape the basic structure of our societies and to inject the countries of origin and destination with new ideas, input, and energy. A by-product of our interdependence, migration is a testament to our diversity.

As is noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871), the goals of the High-level Dialogue are clear: to raise awareness of the development dimensions of migration, to examine the migration-development nexus and to identify examples of best practices.

The Republic of Korea has been mentioned as a noteworthy case with regard to migration policies. We have the dual status of a country of origin and destination; we attract home our expatriate researchers through various policy incentives; and we successfully integrate a large number of foreign immigrants into Korean society.

In order to maximize the benefits and contain any collateral damage of migration, policies tailored to those particularities of the country are indispensable. Without them, migration could lead to an uneven distribution of benefits among societies.

Our first task in addressing this issue, then, should be to devise comprehensive and coherent migration policies in all concerned countries. Poorly integrated immigrants are a source of segregation, social problems, tensions and security-related challenges. Countries of destination should focus on formulating migration policies that take into account the long-term objective of social integration.

Another focus of a win-win migration policy involves the introduction of a domestic system to absorb the migration benefits by the countries of

origin. Remittances — at least $167 billion in 2005 alone — seem to be one of the most immediate and tangible benefits of migration. Without a solid social system, however, the development potential of those huge resources cannot be realized.

In order for remittances to actually benefit the local economy, we first need to seek ways to reduce transnational transaction fees. Secondly, migrant families should be provided with technical assistance to utilize remittances in order to enhance productivity and thus increase their income. Microfinances would be the most useful system for the families of migrants. Countries of origin must also put mechanisms in place to mobilize the developmental potential of skilled migrants who return home.

I believe that we cannot maximize the contributions of migrants to societies without enlisting the help of the business community. The business community must recognize the economic potential of migrants, not only in terms of their labour, but also as contributors to the expansion of trade and tourism. The business community should thus be actively involved in discussions on the development potential of immigration. Furthermore, various methods to facilitate real partnerships between Governments, international organizations and the private sector need to be considered. In this regard, the Global Compact provides a worthy model of a successful international business partnership.

International cooperation on issues relating to migration is also crucial. The recently established Global Migration Group should serve to enhance coordination, cooperation and coherence between international organizations working in the field of migration and development. At the same time, we must also embrace regional efforts such as the Bali Process, among others.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Caroline Ziade, chair of the delegation of Lebanon.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): We welcome the holding of this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. We believe that this Dialogue will provide an excellent opportunity for an exchange of ideas and views on migration. Furthermore, it will allow for the exploration of new horizons in terms of increasing the mutual benefits derived from migration. We also appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in preparing his report (A/60/871) entitled "International migration and development", and we consider it to be a good step forward.

Lebanon has 4 million people inside the country and 12 million people abroad, whose number includes 3 per cent of the population of Australia. Gibran Khalil Gibran, Carlos Ghosn, Elias Khoury, George Dabaghi, Nicolas Hayek, Amin Maalouf: they are but a small example of the great contribution that Lebanese expatriates have bestowed upon their host nations and the world.

Migration is a phenomenon that has paralleled the modern history of human beings. It was the prospect of overcoming adversity and improving their standard of living that pushed many men and women to leave their homelands and migrate to wealthier and more developed countries. It is quite obvious that the main reasons for migration are poverty, underdevelopment, social exclusion and foreign occupation, together with the absence of peace, security and stability, the large income differential between high- and low-income countries and economic crises.

In 2005, the estimated number of international migrants reached 191 million, of whom 115 million lived in developed countries and 75 million in developing countries. This means that the magnitude of South-to-South migration is comparable to that of South-to-North migration.

The positive economic and social impact of migration on the receiving and sending countries is certainly beyond doubt. According to World Bank estimates, migrants' remittances at the world level amounted to an estimated $232 billion in 2005. The share of global remittances going to developing countries is equal to $167 billion. Those remittances increase families' incomes in countries of origin and help them secure access to services such as education and health. They also improve the entrepreneurship atmosphere and increase the ability of households to make productive investments. In Lebanon, for instance, the remittances of Lebanese emigrants are estimated to be equal to 12 per cent of gross domestic product.

In certain cases, the contribution of remittances to the overall economies of countries of origin is greater than official development assistance. There is a need, therefore, for more action to reduce the transfer fees tied to migrant remittances with a view to increasing the benefits derived from them. The important

contribution of remittances to the economies of the sending countries should not be used as a pretext to reduce official development assistance to developing countries.

It is well known that migrants who return home bring with them expertise and savings. They use their expertise to transfer to their countries of origin the know-how they acquired in the countries of destination. Moreover, they use their savings to start businesses that contribute to job creation in the countries of origin, thereby reducing unemployment rates.

In countries of destination, migrants supplement, rather than substitute, the greater majority of workers in the receiving countries. Inflows of low-skilled migrants help to fill jobs that are no longer attractive to the local population. Migrant workers also help to maintain services that would otherwise disappear.

The receiving States should respect the human rights of migrants. The receiving States, together with the countries of origin, should combat the traffic in persons and the smuggling of migrants and punish those offences. Also, receiving States should accord migrants equal treatment and should prohibit all forms of discrimination. The successful integration of migrants depends upon their protection from racism, xenophobia and ethnocentrism.

In conclusion, it is important to mention the fact that migrants contribute greatly to the dialogue between culture and civilizations. They largely account for the very first encounters between different civilizations and cultures. The success of that dialogue hinges upon the acceptance of their differences by the hosting societies and upon the recognition of such differences as a source of enrichment rather than discord.

The Acting President: In line with the announcement made earlier, I now give the floor to the Chairman of round table 4, His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Ndongou, Deputy Minister to the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Francophonie and Social Integration of Gabon.

Mr. Ndongou (Gabon), Chairman of round table 4 (*spoke in French*): It is my task to summarize the discussions that took place in round table 4, which focused on the issue of promoting the building of partnerships and capacity-building and the sharing of best practices at all levels, including the bilateral and regional levels, for the benefit of countries and migrants alike.

Our discussion, which was thorough and thoughtful, arrived at a number of conclusions. There was a general consensus that international cooperation is essential to promote the benefits of international immigration and to address its problematic aspects. International cooperation could occur at different levels. Bilateral negotiations and formal agreements are necessary to achieve concrete outcomes and enhance collaboration on individual matters, but since migration involves groups of countries, multilateral cooperation is also called for.

Most participants gave examples of successful multilateral processes at the subregional and regional levels. Those processes range from informal consultative meetings that contribute to building understanding between various parties and helping to establish common ground among the participating countries, to the setting up of formal institutions aimed at achieving regional integration and facilitating the movement of people.

The parties agreed that such processes — which are at different stages of development — are helpful and should be sustained; they should also no doubt be reinforced by dialogue at a higher level. Some participants expressed their support for the continuation of dialogue at a global level. Several speakers welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General to set up a global consultative forum that would allow informal consultations, so as to find common ground on specific issues related to international migration and development. The forum would provide a means to exchange experience and best practices so that the challenges posed by international migration could be addressed in concrete and effective ways.

The importance of building partnership and strengthening capacity to face the challenges posed by international migration, as a component of development, was underscored. The role that international organizations could play in that regard was welcomed. Several types of partnership were considered. Participants noted that partnerships between Governments and the private sector could be instrumental in promoting beneficial outcomes from migration. Associations of employers and trade unions,

in particular, could help develop migration policies and support their implementation.

We agreed on the importance of social dialogue to ensure the support of citizens for equitable migration policies, and a better reflection of the views of all stakeholders on policy development. Governments were encouraged to cooperate with the private sector and civil society, to improve the situation of migrant workers and their families and also to foster a more positive perception of the contributions that migrants make to their host countries.

Cooperation between the private sector and government authorities could facilitate the transfer of remittances to countries of origin, reduce transfer costs and, even more importantly, foster the productive use of migrant's savings. International cooperation and partnership were also considered essential to combat irregular migration and find solutions to the problems thus raised. The participants called for greater cooperation between Governments and stakeholders, including migrants' associations and youth. Civil society in general has a major role to play in cooperating with government authorities to implement policy and to assist migrants in adapting to the host society.

The role of partnerships between different stakeholders would be to provide training for migrants and to facilitate their adaptation to the host country and their reintegration upon return; the promotion of healthcare for migrants was also highlighted. The importance of building partnerships and garnering international cooperation in support of capacity-building was underscored. Capacity-building was deemed necessary by both countries of origin and countries of destination. Capacity must be built in all branches of government dealing with migrants, including, inter alia, justice, home affairs, migration services, foreign affairs, social services and border control.

Civil society and the private sector could engage in partnerships for the purpose of capacity-building. Intergovernmental cooperation is also important, in particular to share experiences and responsibility for border control, and to ensure the protection of migrants, especially those needing international protection such as asylum-seekers, refugees and women and children.

Such were the results of the discussion in round table 4, which I call upon you to ratify.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Tat Thanh, chairman of the delegation of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Tat Thanh (Viet Nam): Let me at the outset thank the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for their initiative and endeavours in bringing together delegates from around the world, as well as representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to discuss international migration, a burning issue of our time.

I am convinced that the High-level Dialogue offers a historic opportunity for a far-reaching discussion on, and an advanced understanding of, multidimensional aspects of international migration and development. Viet Nam, which has about 2.5 million migrants and migrant workers in more than 80 countries and territories, will do whatever it can to contribute to the success of the new process.

Viet Nam associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation also shares most of the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled, "International migration and development" (A/60/871), as well as his statement at the opening of the Dialogue.

Today, international migration is widely envisioned in the context of globalization and the growing wealth disparities it engenders between different countries and regions. In our view, people are drawn to migrate mainly because of the "pull" factors, which are encouraged by the demand for more flexible labour in countries of destination. That is a natural phenomenon and part of the "unfinished business of globalization". There is no doubt that, apart from making contributions towards the prosperity of destination countries, migrants play an increasingly important role in promoting development and poverty reduction in countries of origin.

While there is a growing recognition that international migration flows have increased over time, the dynamics and policy implications of that phenomenon have not been given adequate attention. The protection of the human rights of migrants and migrant workers, including the rights to education,

food and adequate housing, have in many cases been ignored. The exploitation of migrants, especially women and children, through human smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, still happens.

Today, women constitute half of the global migrant population and they are among the world's most vulnerable workers. Their working conditions vary enormously. Some are treated as members of the employer's family, while others are exploited and subjected to conditions which, in some cases, amount to virtual slavery, forced labour, servitude or sexual exploitation.

Over the past few decades, migration has grown in volume and migration trends have become ever more complex. However, policy on migration issues is no longer discussed in purely regional terms, while a global mechanism capable of coping with the complexities and challenges of growing migration has not been put in place, even under the auspices of the United Nations. For many years now, only the International Organization for Migration and a number of regional structures, in collaboration with related United Nations agencies, have been actively involved in cooperation on migration.

The President returned to the Chair.

Viet Nam is of the view that, if this "unfinished business of globalization" is to be effectively taken in hand, we must, in addition to enhancing bilateral and regional cooperation on migration, establish more institutional mechanisms that can serve as forums in which all States, as well as international organizations and agencies, can exchange views and experiences and promote cooperation and the coordination of efforts with a view to better addressing migration issues at the global level.

We also hope that the High-level Dialogue can focus on considering ways and means to further integrate the IOM into the United Nations inter-agency system. In addition, the High-level Dialogue and its follow-up meetings should discuss steps and measures to further integrate migration into national and international development strategies and to promote partnerships, capacity-building and the sharing of best practices at all levels — including the bilateral and regional levels — for the benefit of countries of origin and countries of destination alike, as well as migrants, in order to fill a perceived gap in the United Nations system in respect of the issue of migration.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Daniele Bodini, chairman of the delegation of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam President, on your appointment and to wish you every success.

Our country, San Marino, today enjoys economic prosperity and an enviable standard of living, but only 60 years ago it was extremely poor and had scant economic prospects. As a matter of fact, most of our people migrated to countries where they thought they could find job opportunities and thus a better life. In Europe, they emigrated mostly to Italy and France, while the preferred overseas destinations were Argentina and the United States of America. Migrant remittances and the return of our emigrants back home were essential in boosting our country's economic development and improving its living conditions. As a nation, we understand very well the anguish created by migration and are very sympathetic towards people in need who seek a better life away from their native countries, sometimes risking their own lives and the lives of family members in desperate journeys.

We believe that it is the responsibility of developed countries to help such people so that their hopes can be fulfilled. Happiness is the fulfilment of hope. However, the acceptance of migrants in an environment that is not ready to provide adequate education, health care, jobs and, most important, social integration can lead to the creation of unwanted and desolate ghettos and give rise to cultural and religious clashes, misunderstanding, intolerance and racism. Such conditions can create, on the one hand, breeding grounds for vocal dissent and violent protest and, on the other, selfishness and prejudice. It is our duty as members of the United Nations family not only to respond to crises, but also — and more importantly — to make every effort to prevent them.

In a world of unrelenting globalization, migration is no longer only a bilateral affair; it is a multilateral mega-issue. Countries of destination should deal with migration in a humane manner, taking into account the needs of their own people and of their social and economic fabrics. Countries of origin, with the assistance of the international community, should ensure that their migrants do not fall victim to human

trafficking and abuse. Their journeys to foreign countries should lead not only to economic rewards, but also to their personal fulfilment as human beings, which will eventually enable them to transfer their know-how and their social and institutional knowledge to their native lands. Transparent international migration rules and laws should be in place and in force to prevent human rights abuses.

San Marino wishes to congratulate the General Assembly on the success of this high-level meeting. We strongly believe that the United Nations, with the cooperation of all its Members, is the best instrument for facing the challenge of migration today and in the years to come.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Amir Muharemi, chairman of the delegation of Croatia.

Mr. Muharemi (Croatia): Allow me to join preceding speakers in expressing satisfaction at participating in this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. It gives us an excellent opportunity for an exchange of views on this complex issue, providing new insights into the global phenomenon of migration.

As Croatia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, I will limit my statement to a discussion of my country's national policies.

First of all, let me reiterate one of the messages contained in the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development (A/60/871), namely, that each of us holds a piece of the migration puzzle, but none of us has the whole picture. It is time to start putting the pieces together. International migration cannot be managed unilaterally. Consequently, country partnerships, bilateral agreements and regional arrangements on migration are multiplying. But the complexity of migration is global; it is a fundamental feature of today's world system and demands attention at the global level.

The Republic of Croatia is at the crossroads of migration flows between the East and the West. As Croatia is a candidate for membership in the European Union (EU), a consistent migration policy will surely have new dimensions and new meaning for us. Although our national legislation in this area is a work in progress, Croatia has already achieved a significant improvement in the regulation of migration, asylum and related matters in the context of harmonizing its domestic laws with EU legislation. We are also in the process of adopting a document aimed at regulating national migration strategy that envisages steps for institutional capacity-building to effectively manage migration.

Croatia manages migration in accordance with the principles of freedom of movement, solidarity and humanity, ensuring respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants. Legal foreign immigrants are permitted to stay in our country either temporarily or permanently, and their social inclusion is one of our top priorities.

Croatia continues to play a prominent role in regional cooperation. In collaboration with the mission of the International Organization for Migration in Croatia, a regional workshop on labour migration for integration and development in South-East Europe was held this year in Zagreb. Its aim was to find a platform for discussing the further development of our policies and programmes on migration within and between countries in South-East Europe, pointing out their positive implications in terms of economics and employment and the fact that they help prevent irregular migration.

In addition, like many other countries, Croatia is only beginning to learn how to maximize the benefits of migration while minimizing its negative effects in terms of development. Historically, Croatia has been a country of emigration, but over the past decade we have encountered a new challenge, noting the steady growth of a positive migratory balance. Some industries, confronted with a shortage of highly skilled workers, employ foreigners. That suggests that Croatia may face a growing demand for skilled and highly skilled workers in the near future. In addition, if negative demographic trends continue, the development of a forward-looking policy may soon become a matter of necessity.

Recognizing the important role of scientists in development, the Croatian Government and a group of prominent scientists have launched a return migration programme which has encouraged Croatian scientists abroad to foster linkages with Croatia through joint international projects, training or specialization of skilled personnel.

The active involvement of national and local authorities and of regional and international institutions, as well as of the private sector, is required if multidimensional aspects of migration issues are to be addressed and managed in a coherent and coordinated way. We strongly believe that migration issues need to be addressed holistically at all levels — national, regional and global.

We support the idea that migration issues should continue to be observed and debated in a voluntary and consultative permanent forum, and initially within the most valuable setting for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of experiences — the United Nations — in order for international migration to be accepted as a normal and crucial element in the development process.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yusupha Kah, Permanent Secretary, Department of State for the Interior of the Gambia.

Mr. Kah (Gambia): My delegation wishes to congratulate the Secretary-General for convening this important High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and to associate itself with the statement made by the delegation of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This meeting is long overdue and sorely needed. Globalization has reached a point that now demands a serious response by the international community to the myriad problems surrounding the free movement of people across international borders. The report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871) demonstrates that along with the problems there are also countless benefits that international migration brings to both sending and receiving countries. Transit countries also benefit from the spillovers. It is clear that international migration is here to stay. No one can legislate against it or wish it away.

It behoves us all, therefore, to initiate and maintain a permanent dialogue on the phenomenon, with a view to maximizing its benefits and minimizing its costs. Countries of the North will have to contend with the fact that with their current demographic trends, it is only through international migration that they will be able to keep their economies and social systems on an even keel. Developing countries must also live with the fact that until the standard of living of their people improves, more and more of their nationals will head towards greener pastures in the industrialized world. Short of imposing repressive measures that violate human rights, there will be no way of halting the wave.

As an African country, the Gambia is concerned about the growing preference for selective migration being displayed by receiving countries in the developed world, because it causes a depletion of the skilled manpower base needed for our social and economic development. It also amounts to us subsidizing the developed countries through the cost of education and training, which we incur in producing professional and skilled workers who are then siphoned away from us into the developed economies of the North. We must urgently address that growing phenomenon which is emerging as a major constraint on our development.

While we do admit that many of our countries benefit from international migration through the remittances that migrants transmit into our economies, we cannot accept that it should be an alternative to the creation of internal mechanisms for growth and development; nor should it be a substitute for official development assistance. Because remittances emanating from international migration contribute to the reduction of poverty for many households in the sending countries, ways must be found to mainstream international migration within the development process, and to relate it more explicitly to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We strongly support the view that we should begin considering ways of reducing the transaction costs of remittances and ensuring that the monies remitted are channelled more formally through our financial systems.

The Gambia does not encourage illegal migration and has taken measures to minimize it, including: strengthening border and sea controls; enhancing cooperation between law enforcement and security agencies; improving information gathering from the public, particularly those at the border and on our beach side; promulgating legislation against the smuggling and trafficking in persons; and entering into bilateral and multilateral cooperation arrangements with other countries.

We strongly condemn any violations of the human rights of migrants, whatever their status, and we join the African Union in unreservedly condemning

acts of racism, xenophobia and discrimination perpetrated against migrants.

As both a sending and a receiving country, the Gambia has mixed experiences. It is true that as a developing country we are as vulnerable as any other to having our brightest and best lured away to greener pastures. We have lost quite a number of people over the years to Europe and North America.

At the same time, we are a destination for hundreds of thousands of migrants, especially from the subregion. They contribute significantly to our economy in critical areas such as manufacturing, health, construction and fishing. A large proportion of teachers in our school system, and professors in our university, are migrants, contributing immensely to our efforts to meet our skilled manpower needs.

As a matter of policy, the Gambia will continue to seek ways of optimizing the benefits of international migration and mitigating its negative effects. We believe that international migration is a complex phenomenon that requires a multifaceted approach, as well as strong political will and commitment on the part of sending and receiving countries and the international community at large. It is our hope that this Dialogue will mark the beginning of a formal and, if possible, permanent process that keeps the important subject of international migration and development under discussion within the international community and leads to the adoption of measures to ensure that it serves all of mankind, wherever they may be.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wang Guangya, chairman of the delegation of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the statement by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The emergence of migration and the development of human society are closely linked. Currently, the number and scale of international migration, as well as the range of countries affected and the impact it produces on the economy of those countries, have reached an unprecedented level. On the one hand, the normal flow of migration can help people to broaden their horizons; promote economic and social development and cultural exchanges among countries; optimize the allocation of human, technical and financial resources; and enhance cooperation among States and joint development. On the other hand, the surge in migration has also led to the increasingly serious problems of illegal migration, human trafficking and other transnational crimes, which pose serious challenges to social security and stability. Migration and development have thereby become important issues that must be faced squarely by the international community.

The Chinese delegation wishes to share with the Assembly the following views and proposals on how to properly handle this issue and promote joint development.

To solve the problems caused by migration, it is essential to address its root causes. Ultimately, migration is caused by unbalanced economic and social development among different countries. In order to find a lasting solution, it is therefore necessary to gradually narrow the gap between rich and poor countries and bring about joint economic development and overall social justice.

Secondly, it is important to improve domestic policies, laws and regulations. Countries should continuously improve their migration policies, laws and regulations, protect the legitimate rights and interests of migrants, oppose discriminatory policies and adhere to the principle of opening up legal channels and blocking illegal ones, so as to enhance the legal and orderly flow of migration and curb illegal migration activities to the greatest possible extent.

Thirdly, international migration must be addressed within the context of development and in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. National Governments should give comprehensive consideration to political, economic, social and cultural factors, strengthen coordination among different departments, facilitate the flow of migration in an orderly and legal manner and enable migrants to be truly integrated into local societies.

We should also act in the fundamental interests of migrants, take into account their special characteristics, effectively safeguard their political, economic and social rights and interests, and fully respect their religious beliefs and cultural traditions. It is also necessary to reduce the transaction costs of remittances, enhance the effectiveness of how they are used and encourage migrants to participate in investment and trade and to return to their own

countries in order to play a role in promoting development.

Fourthly, sincere efforts should be made to achieve international cooperation. The international community — especially countries of origin, transit and destination — should strengthen dialogue and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit to effectively manage the flow of migration.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the issue of migration and to the related opportunities and challenges. In the light of the latest developments, in recent years the Chinese Government has adjusted its border management policy and improved the efficiency of arrangements for entering and exiting the country, in order to facilitate a regular population flow. At the same time, we have acted resolutely and forcefully against illegal migration. We have formulated and improved relevant laws and regulations, intensified law enforcement and reinforced public education. We have also incorporated into our national development plan such elements as financial incentives and tax reductions and exemptions. We have also simplified entry and exit procedures to encourage Chinese students abroad to come back to work in China and reduce the brain drain.

China has also assumed an active role in international and regional migration cooperation, exchanged experiences and cooperated with relevant countries and international organizations on the basis of mutual respect and consultations.

This Dialogue marks the beginning of the discussion of migration and development at the United Nations. We hope that the international community will seize this opportunity to further strengthen dialogue and contribute to joint development in the world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexei Tulbure, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Tulbure (Republic of Moldova): For Moldova, migration is indeed an important source of development. We have come here to confirm the clear connection that exists between migration and development. That is in fact the theme of our Dialogue and one of the main conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (A/60/871). We fully share the conclusions of that report and believe that the idea to hold the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development is an extremely timely one.

In order to have an idea of how strongly Moldova is affected by the process of migration, it is enough to know that Moldova's dependence on remittances is the second highest in the world and that remittances account for 27 per cent of our gross domestic product. Over 80 per cent of Moldova's migrants remit funds and for more than 70 per cent of senders, those remittances constitute half of their earnings. According to our official statistics, in 2005 almost 400,000 Moldovans went to work abroad or to seek jobs. That constitutes over 25 per cent of our total active population.

However, migration is also a source of many distressing problems. Today I would like to concentrate on the negative aspects of international migration.

The very moment we speak about migration we start speaking about discrimination, exclusion, criminality, illegal trafficking, smuggling and similar subjects. The reason for that is obvious: all the phenomena I referred to are today connected to international migration. Migration is perceived by many as something unlawful, bad and troublesome. There are clear signs today that we are not coping with the situation or with the new trends in contemporary migration processes. Criminals rather than Governments often control the main migratory movements. The less we are able to develop adequate polices, frameworks and new institutions to effectively address international migration, the more opportunities we offer to criminals, who become rich at the expense of migrants.

What do we need today? In my opinion, we need a sort of rehabilitation of international migration that should lead to the development and implementation of relevant policies at the local, national, regional and global levels. We need to decriminalize migration while at the same time contributing to the reduction of poverty and to improving general living conditions in the countries of origin. I believe that, while we fight against criminals, the best thing to do would be to expand the channels for regular and legal migration — or, to put it in a more politically correct way, documented migration. That would more closely match reality.

The reality is that millions of people today have no choice but to migrate — in search of food, water, work, human dignity and hope. And nobody can stop them. There is no need to do so. What we have to do is to take those people out of the hands of criminals and help them — if it is really impossible to have a decent life in their countries of origin — to arrive at their new destinations and to integrate into their new environments. That would benefit everyone, migrants, countries of origin and countries of destination. Those new mechanisms and policies could be developed in bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the rights of migrants and those of the victims of trafficking in human beings are of vital importance. We already have some good news in that respect. For example, the Council of Europe recently developed and opened for signature and ratification the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The protection of the rights of victims is at the centre of that Convention. We believe that to be an example of good international cooperation and joint endeavour regarding certain aspects of the phenomenon of migration that we should commend and build on. I hope that our High-level Dialogue will be a new and powerful start in the difficult search for adequate responses to the political, economic and cultural challenges arising from international migration at the global level.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Irakli Alasania, chairman of the delegation of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): The Georgian delegation wishes to welcome the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development as a much-needed step towards placing migration issues on the international agenda.

In today's world of globalization and interdependency, every country is affected to a certain extent by the various issues related to international mobility. Efficiently managed migration can be beneficial to all — countries of origin, transit and destination. But there are many challenges and a number of issues that have to be addressed urgently to avoid illegal migration, trafficking, organized crime and terrorism.

International migration has significantly affected Georgia since our independence. Experts estimate that more than 20 per cent of the country's 1989 population — over 1 million people — have left Georgia since independence. According to the Secretariat's Population Division, Georgia was among the top 20 countries worldwide in net emigration between 1995 and 2000.

In the 1990s, socio-economic realities in the country were the leading motivation forcing thousands to travel abroad for work and education. Our citizens have ventured to Russia, Europe, the United States and Canada for skilled and unskilled job opportunities that offer higher incomes to better support their families at home. Conflicts in two separatist regions — Abkhazia and Tskhinvali — were other causes of migration. Ethnic cleansing and mass expulsions forced tens of thousands of our citizens to flee abroad.

In 2003, the Rose Revolution sparked renewed hope and serious interest among all Georgians living abroad in our country's renewed prospects for the future. That provided a window of opportunity to engage our diverse and far-flung population as partners in Georgia's development. We have already taken steps to begin that process by making it possible to hold dual citizenship, which was granted to almost 1,400 persons in 2005. We are also increasing the outreach of the President and top Government officials.

We hope to pursue a more comprehensive strategy, focusing on four main areas: engaging highly skilled migrants, maximizing remittances, leveraging and protecting economic migrants and relations with the diaspora. Experts estimate that 40 to 55 per cent of those leaving Georgia are highly educated. They also believe that movement has resulted in a significant brain drain. However, as a result of rapid economic reforms, Georgia has become a more attractive place to invest and work, and is ripe for reaching out to our highly skilled diaspora. While we continue to encourage return, we are also looking to explore ways to engage the highly skilled members of our diaspora where they are living by creating knowledge networks, engaging them in joint projects with host countries and recruiting them to help promote investment in Georgia.

Remittances are an important source of revenue for many Georgian households, and continue to grow as a percentage of our gross domestic product. Official estimates show growth rates of 4.8 per cent in 2003 and 6.3 per cent in 2005. Most experts believe the growth of remittances to be two to three times greater.

We would also like to help our citizens to maximize their private funds by improving the banking system. We can also provide new and innovative remittance-sending tools and products to our migrants by learning from the successes experienced by Latin American and Asian countries. We want to work with host countries to empower our citizens to use the banking systems in those countries.

Georgia's working age population has shrunk due to labour migration, compounded by our slightly negative natural population growth rate. We need to offer our citizens more legal opportunities to work abroad, protect their rights against discrimination, promote stronger entrepreneurial linkages and improve prospects for sustainable return by developing readmission agreements and targeting business development resources to returnees.

In addition to those who left recently, we believe there are roughly 8 million non-citizen ethnic Georgians throughout the world. They are primarily concentrated in Turkey, Iran, Russia and Israel, as well as in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Since 2004 we have made great efforts to strengthen cultural ties with our diaspora around the world.

As I mentioned earlier, the issue of legal opportunities to work abroad is extremely important for Georgia. We are also focusing our national and international efforts on the fight against trafficking in human beings. For its part, the Georgian Government, with the support of international organizations, has launched a very intensive programme against trafficking. To that end, a national action plan has been adopted, in accordance with which a coordination centre was established.

We are all very well aware of the fact that national efforts alone are not enough. Support and cooperation with partners is essential. Investment and assistance will foster sustainable development, boost economies and protect human rights. We hope that our joint efforts, along with strong action by the international community, the United Nations and other international organizations, will help to address these problems. We believe that our forum will be able to come up with effective responses to those challenges.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Chairperson of the delegation of Tonga.

Mrs. 'Utoikamanu (Tonga): May I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the convening of this historic High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/60/871), which provides a comprehensive review of the multidimensional aspects of international migration, as well as initial thoughts on how to improve the governance of migration.

At the outset, Tonga also wishes to align itself with the statement made by Her Excellency Ms. Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Pacific island countries, and my country in particular, can date their foreign adventures as far back as the fourteenth century, before the term "irregular migration" was introduced into our vocabulary. We have all come a long way. Fast-forwarding to 2006, a number of Tongans equal to more than 100 per cent of our national population reside in three countries abroad. Tonga is categorized as a mature migration remittance economy and, as of 2005, ranks as the second country most dependent on remittances as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) — currently 29 per cent.

In a small way, our country's experience has demonstrated the important nexus between international migration and development. A recent World Bank study that included the results of an empirical analysis of remittances to Tonga concluded that recipient household migration and remittances had a positive impact on migrant-sending countries, improved income distribution, had a positive impact on poverty alleviation, brought about higher rates of savings, stimulated business activities and resulted in larger investments in education.

The established relationship between migration and its contribution to poverty alleviation and economic development, and the significant contribution of remittances to development, are clear. However, the attention accorded to labour emigration and its positive impact on the development of sending countries is perhaps quite limited. Overseas development assistance alone cannot address the problems associated with small island States. As the World Bank study highlighted, improved and unrestricted but organized labour mobility can

significantly contribute to a country's GDP and to overall global income.

Labour mobility is a potential vehicle to achieve our commitments to pro-poor strategies such as the Millennium Development Goals and other global commitments to achieve national sustainable development strategies. At the same time, Tonga's demographic profile, particularly its population growth, has been stabilized by emigration. But the migration phenomenon has not been without costs, including social costs and human capital costs in terms of the brain drain.

While stressing the importance of remittances as an important source of development financing, we view remittances as complementary and not as a substitute for overseas development assistance. On the pressing issue of the transaction costs of remittances, Tonga also welcomes support for addressing this and for promoting conditions for cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances.

Tonga, like many other Pacific island countries, is not only a sending State; it is also a transit and a receiving State. The challenge for all of us is therefore to design a migration policy that is closest to what the Secretary-General described in his report as the best-case scenario, where migration benefits the receiving country, the country of origin and migrants themselves. That will require commitment and political will, as well as the continuation and, where absent, the enhancement of dialogue, to be followed by specific action not only at the bilateral but also at the regional and international levels. Such forums can also address other important issues, such as irregular migration, social integration and access to services, as well as develop schemes for the temporary movement of persons that cover both skilled and unskilled workers.

Tonga shares the concern for the exploitation of migrants through mechanisms such as trafficking and migrant smuggling. In 2005 we passed a transnational crimes bill, which criminalizes under domestic law trafficking in persons, trafficking in children and people-smuggling.

Tonga has also benefited from the support provided through its bilateral contacts, as well as by regional organizations such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime and the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference. There is potential for the expansion of the roles of those existing regional processes to deal with any new issues that may develop as a member State attempts to deal with the real and complex issues of migration and development.

In conclusion, the High-level Dialogue is an important and vital step in raising awareness of the development dimension of international migration. We must maintain momentum and agree on the formation of an appropriate consultative forum, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report, to maintain our focus on international migration issues while signalling that international migration is a normal but crucial element in the development process.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Collin Beck, chairman of the delegation of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): My delegation would like to join others in congratulating you, Madam, on your election to preside over this important gathering.

International migration gives a human face to globalization. It defines and represents the global structure that divides the world between the industrialized North and the developing South. It is important to note that the flow of migrants from the southern hemisphere to the North is due to the demographic and social structure of the industrialized world and the need for workers.

Solomon Islands values this meeting, as it provides an opportunity to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to measure and match the supply and demand of the global labour market, as argued by the International Organization for Migration and by the Group of 77. Solomon Islands attaches great importance to this subject, as it pertains to a development opportunity that, if not well managed, can become a security concern, both for receiving and sending States. Migration is also an integral part of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

At the national level, Solomon Islands is made up of half a million people, who speak 80 different languages. It embraces a rich cultural diversity. Inter-island migration is therefore an economic issue. The pull factor in all migration routes, be they internal or external, is related to economic gain. Population movement tends to occur in the direction of where there is economic activity. The challenge is to balance

the participation of migrant workers and indigenous populations. To leave anyone a spectator to development could lead to instability setting in, as recently experienced by Solomon Islands in its ethnic conflict. In that connection, the High-level Dialogue must take time to look at the domestic movement of labour as well.

Having said that, both internal and international migration contribute to a country's foreign income, not only through remittances but also, most important, through the transfer of knowledge, capacity and good practices. In other words, it is a win-win situation for both migrants and receiving countries.

Within the Pacific region there are varying levels of international migrant workers. There are countries within the region that provide labour to developed economies, while there are also developing countries that acquire labour from within the subregion. Also within the Pacific subregion, work has already begun to explore short-term labour migration with some of our developed neighbours. While nothing concrete has yet emerged from those discussions, my delegation is pleased to note that a dialogue on shared migration opportunities seeking regional concerted action has been put on the table. The regional discussion has allowed us to better understand the position of receiving States, and we hope that it will allow us to work towards striking a balance.

For many of the least development countries, development has not kept pace with the growth of their populations. Limited opportunities have been the push factor leading local populations to migrate and seek employment internationally. Solomon Islands, on the other hand, does not have a large migrant population. But it does have an abundant supply of labour relative to the local employment market. A good number of our workers are located and employed in rural areas. Urban drift has put pressure on agriculture-based economies, but it has not provided jobs. Therefore, the Government remains the largest employer in the country, rather than the private sector. The challenges are due to the high costs of communication and transportation, the smallness of the market and lack of foreign-direct investors to provide the engine for growth needed to see the economy take off.

In that respect, the Government is examining all economic opportunities to guarantee our population a secure future. Solomon Islands could not agree more that there is a need to establish an adequate and transparent mechanism, especially as regards short-term contracts, that will ensure that workers are documented and legally processed, so as to avoid having workers working outside the system, which places them in a more vulnerable position.

My delegation would also like to see more coordination between all international organizations and United Nations agencies in combating human trafficking, including the development of a common mechanism to address that.

I would like to conclude by assuring you, Madam President, of my delegation's ongoing support and cooperation as we seek an international solution to migration that will ensure that all countries can benefit.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis, chairman of the delegation of Cyprus.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on having convened this High-level Dialogue. The time could not be more appropriate for the start of a frank and open exchange of views and ideas on this important international issue that affects the lives and welfare of us all, as individuals and as States. I would also like to extend our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for focusing high-level political attention on the many linkages between development and migration.

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I would, however, like to make the following additional comments.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Migration is a global phenomenon as old as man itself. In the quest to find better lives and improve their standards of living, people move across borders.

As we now live in an era of increased human mobility due to technological advances, an era marked by diversity and multiculturalism, any prevailing negative perceptions of the past must not be inhibiting factors in dealing with this normal fact of human civilization. In principle, migration should not be seen as a threat to or as a destabilizing factor for the economies of recipient countries. Of course, it is a phenomenon that needs to be regulated. But, if

supported by the right policies, it can be a blessing for development both in recipient countries and in countries of origin.

Cyprus has historically been a country of emigration, exporting migrants to richer countries. In fact, it is estimated that as many Cypriots live abroad as on the island itself. The invasion of 1974 and the displacement of one third of our population resulted in new waves of emigration. Many Cypriot refugees who had lost their livelihoods sought employment abroad. Since then, Cyprus has seen extensive economic development and has become a host to migrants, who contribute positively to the economy and its high growth rates. The contribution of Cypriots of the diaspora was also crucial for the economic miracle that Cyprus experienced in the 1980s.

Cyprus is firmly committed to the protection of human rights of all migrants and has ratified all major human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols, and the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Cyprus is also in the process of ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Our immigration and refugee laws have been harmonized with the relevant European laws and are implemented according to European Union policies and practices in this field.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871) provides an in-depth study of the issue of international migration and development and contains a plethora of suggestions and ideas that merit further discussion and elaboration. Notable recommendations are also contained in the report of the Global Commission on International Migration. Concerning the recommendation of the Secretary-General that a global forum be established, the position of the European Union has been presented by the Finnish presidency; Cyprus welcomes Belgium's offer to host the forum's first meeting.

Cyprus is fully committed to cooperate with all relevant actors at the national, regional and international level and through the common policies of the European Union for the enhancement of the benefit of migration to development, and to fully play its part in the process that is now being initiated.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dusan Bella, Chairman of the delegation of Slovakia.

Mr. Bella (Slovakia): Especially at the beginning of twentieth century, my small country produced thousands upon thousands of migrants bound particularly for the United States of America, and I have to say that this still affects my country's social consciousness.

Slovakia welcomes the organization of this High-level Dialogue, as migration is increasingly becoming an integral part of global processes, bringing both concerns and challenges — not only to migrants, but also to countries of origin, transit and destination. This fact is supported by the latest Transatlantic Trends survey of United States and European public opinion. According to those findings, 79 per cent of Americans and 76 per cent of Europeans agree that large numbers of immigrants coming into their respective countries constitute an important threat.

Slovakia, lying on the east-west migratory route in Europe, has not had to deal with an excessive influx of migrants so far. Nonetheless, Slovakia, as a smaller European Union (EU) country, is involved in formulating EU migration policies and therefore fully supports the joint EU position presented at this High-level Dialogue, the European Union Global Approach to Migration adopted in December 2005, and instruments and policy guidelines contained in the so-called Hague programme. That programme sets forth, inter alia, the European Union objective of creating a common European asylum system. From our own experience, we can provide evidence that misuse of asylum procedures is still a frequent and widespread phenomenon. To facilitate the integration of migrants in Slovakia, we are working on a set of guidelines for an integration policy for migrants, which will cover all migrant groups and all aspects of their work and life in our country.

We consider negotiations on readmission agreements at the European Union level to be a big step forward in the management of migration flows and in the effort to eliminate illegal migration.

Last year, the Slovak Government adopted a set of migration policy guidelines which created preconditions for the implementation of effective policies and measures in the areas that are being discussed at this forum. Those policy guidelines aim to improve coordination among various Slovak institutions involved in the management of the migration process. One of the goals set out in the

guidelines is the establishment of an immigration and naturalization office before 2010.

Slovakia supports the strengthening of international dialogue and cooperation on migration issues, but at the same time we share the opinion that there is still room for better use of existing institutions and activities. Of course, any new initiative is welcome as long as it has potential for success and brings new added value to work already done in various international forums.

Slovakia reaffirms the need to fully implement the United Nations conventions that fight all sources of intolerance, encourage cultural variety and focus on fostering human rights, mutual respect and understanding among civilizations. In this context, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Slovak Government has approved an action plan on preventing all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other signs of intolerance.

We are convinced that the management of migration is the common responsibility of all countries involved. Therefore, we engage in dialogue on migration with various countries and regions in the world. But at the same time, our cooperation is predominantly with our neighbours with the aim of creating conditions for the better management of migration flows and the smooth extension of the Schengen area by the end of next year.

The Slovak Republic shares the view that migration and development are two inseparable agendas. The activities of the United Nations, the European Union and other organizations should be carried out along coordinated lines in order to achieve the best possible results.

The misuse of asylum systems has been a major source of illegal migration; this phenomenon deserves international attention. Better management of migration processes would bring about a decrease in unfounded asylum claims, and genuine refugees would then enjoy better protection and accelerated asylum procedures. In addition, we think that more attention needs to be drawn to the possibility that suspects involved in terrorist activities could misuse asylum procedures.

Slovakia believes that this Dialogue can be instrumental in identifying inconsistencies in existing migration and development policies while contributing significantly to the building of partnerships among countries of origin, transit and destination.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, chairman of the delegation of Angola.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): First of all, allow me to join others in extending to Ms. Al-Khalifa my delegation's congratulations on her election as President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Responding to the President's appeal, I shall deliver a summary version of my statement and shall circulate copies of the full text.

Globalization has created an important partnership among the countries of the world, but it has also widened the gap between rich and poor, not to mention the economic disparities between countries and whole regions. That situation, together with other difficulties, such as wars, the deterioration of the environment and geopolitical transformations, forces an increasing number of people to leave their homes. That reality requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account not only the causes of, but also the complex relationship between migration and economic development.

Angola recognizes the high importance of international migration to the development agenda of the United Nations. Thus, we thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on international migration, contained in document A/60/871, which provides us with useful information on recent developments in international migration, and in particular very revealing statistics on the growing role of migration as a contribution to economic growth and development.

Given the recommendations of the international community, my country is concerned about the related criminality that afflicts many States. The Republic of Angola is fully immersed in the process of adhering to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, particularly in relation to the illicit traffic of migrants by land, sea and air and to the prevention and punishment of human trafficking, especially of women and children, and we are therefore engaged in the fight against targeted crimes.

In conclusion, we agree with the Secretary-General that this High-level Dialogue should be seen not only as an end in itself, but also as part of a process that will continue to be carefully analyzed in all the multidimensional aspects of migration and development. We in Angola have the political will to play our part towards making the recommendations and conclusions of this High-level Dialogue an important contribution to development. Let us seize this opportunity to strengthen the Dialogue, thus making migration a positive force in common development and the fight against poverty.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Johan Verbeke, chairman of the delegation of Belgium.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like first to thank and congratulate the Secretary-General for having taken the initiative to organize this Dialogue and his Special Representative for having prepared it so well.

This initiative testifies to vision and courage. Indeed, nobody could have foreseen in 2003, when the decision to convene this Dialogue was taken, that only three years later migration would be at the heart of the policy concerns of all the members of the international community, migratory flows having grown not only in the North-South direction, but also in the South-South direction.

The debates organized by the Global Commission on International Migration and the regional consultations that took place from 2003 to 2005 were an important catalyst for carrying the debate to a political level. We have a common interest in identifying a global and balanced approach by taking the multiple dimensions of migration into account.

We need to install a coherent set of short-, middle- and long-term actions and policies. In the short term, we need to make greater efforts to discourage illegal migration by disseminating objective information on and increased awareness of the risks of human trafficking that are inherent to irregular migration. That dissuasion also needs to take place by means of increased border control, the negotiation of readmission agreements, and above all by the fight against human trafficking networks.

In the medium term, we need to better incorporate the migration dimension into our cooperation policies. That means we must further promote an environment conducive to development in the countries of origin and consider how migration can contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and how it can be included in poverty reduction programmes.

In the long term, we must make international migration, trade and agriculture policies more coherent with our development goals.

The conference that Belgium organized in March in Brussels, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, the World Bank and the European Commission, and which was attended by many present here today, shed light on those questions and has helped us to outline some responses. It highlighted the valuable role that the diaspora communities can play in favour of their country of origin.

Another truism that was reiterated in Brussels — many truisms need to be hammered home — is that we will achieve nothing if we do not treat migratory phenomena in a spirit of partnership among all the countries involved.

Once this High-level Dialogue is over, there are some priorities on which we should continue to work. The first priority field is data collection. We cannot develop credible policies without more reliable data on migratory flows.

Secondly, we should examine the consequences of globalization on the job market and ensure a better balance between supply and demand.

Thirdly, the contribution of migration to the Millennium Development Goals, and especially the role of migrant communities that generate transfers not only by means of social contributions, but also in the cultural, financial and economic fields, should also be studied.

Fourthly, over and above transfers is the question of the voluntary return of persons. The investigations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development have shown that, to date, some of our co-development policies, while objectively praiseworthy, have not really succeeded in turning those returns into development opportunities. Together, we need to redefine co-development as a genuine approach to development. Belgium also proposes in that respect the

creation of a co-development fund at the European level.

Fifthly and lastly, the contribution of migrants in their countries of destination should also be optimized. That raises the question of the integration and rights of migrants. We are all aware of the fact that this is a vast programme which will not be achieved unless the international community and all its participants take action. In that regard, we welcome the fact that the Secretary-General and his Special Representative have proposed the establishment of a permanent process of dialogue and cooperation in the form of a global forum for migration and development.

Belgium is ready to host the first such forum next year in Brussels and we thank those delegations that have shown their confidence in Belgium.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Rosemary Banks, chairperson of the delegation of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to participate in this exchange on international migration and development. We recognize that immigration issues and their impact require a long-term strategic dialogue.

The short-term migration of workers has significant development potential and can benefit both origin and destination countries by helping meet labour market demand and providing remittance flows and the potential for skill development and knowledge transfer, while enabling migrants to return home.

Although there are benefits from labour flows, there are also a number of economic and social risks to the sending country, which have already been well described by other speakers.

At this late hour, I would like to touch very briefly on New Zealand's immigration programme, labour mobility in the South Pacific region, and the way we see the future of this Dialogue.

New Zealand is in the midst of the biggest overhaul of immigration legislation in 20 years. We have recently undertaken a wide consultative process on these changes. We currently face critical skill shortages in key areas of industry. Immigration for us is vital.

Positive settlement outcomes for new migrants, along with robust border security, are priorities within our immigration change programme. This programme already includes a highly successful settlement strategy, which acknowledges that migration is an end-to-end process and that productivity comes best through successful settlement for migrants.

While New Zealand's main focus is on attracting skilled labour, we are, at the same time, a developed country located in the South Pacific. As part of our Pacific region, New Zealand recognizes that there must be opportunities for Pacific Islanders, skilled and unskilled, to access permanent employment in New Zealand. In addition to the mainstream immigration policy options, we have two dedicated permanent immigration schemes: the Samoan Quota (for Samoan nationals) and the Pacific Access Category (for nationals of Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati).

New Zealand believes that open dialogue among countries is an effective way of addressing global migration issues. That has been demonstrated in regional processes like the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

Looking to the future and to the way this High-level Dialogue is taken forward, New Zealand would be cautious about establishing a new global forum on migration. We think that the avenue to address migration issues already exists in various structures. Any new forum that may be agreed should not duplicate existing forums and should have the potential to add value to the existing debates. New Zealand believes that if there is a consensus to establish an informal forum it should be voluntary and driven by States. It should build on the work of regional forums and allow for consultation and the exchange of good practices. It should not lead to negotiated outcomes.

In closing, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his thought-provoking report (A/60/871), and all the delegations who have contributed to this Dialogue.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Ms. Sohail Hernández, chairman of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Hernández (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the opportunity of this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development as a favourable opportunity to

discuss, on a broad basis, the multidimensional elements of international migration, including the gender perspective, cultural diversity and full respect for human rights.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has insisted in various forums that migration is a topic that should be tackled from a comprehensive perspective that focuses on the social content of the topic itself because, above all, we believe that the origin of the problems involved is to be found in the growing imbalance between developing and developed countries, given the prevailing economic system. That is why we believe that, at the national level, we have to emphasize the following elements — rejection of discrimination on grounds of race, sex, creed, nationality or legal status; respect for diversity, since our society is multi-ethnic and pluricultural; orientation towards priority areas of national development; full respect for the human rights of the migrant worker and his or her family, including labour rights, the right to social security and education, inter alia; a migrant policy based on the principles of tolerance, solidarity, gender equality, justice and social equity; and respect for signed and ratified treaties and international conventions.

Similarly, the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in its Title III on duties, human rights and guarantees, provides for coverage of the social needs of all persons, whether nationals or foreigners, as reflected in the recent enactment of a series of legal instruments. Among those instruments, I would mention in particular, the Aliens and Migration Act, adopted in May 2004, the regulations to regularize and naturalize foreigners of February 2004, and the Organic Law on the Social Security system of December 2002.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Venezuela has developed a series of administrative mechanisms that we would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly, including: the implementation of an automated system to issue work permits for foreign workers; the implementation of a system linked to the computer systems of a national network of employment agencies; the creation of an automated mainframe database; the decentralization of the labour and migration services towards the employment agency network; and the updating and simplification of mechanisms and procedures for controlling migrant flows.

As regards protecting and defending the human rights of migrants, the national Government has taken a number of measures to promote human rights. Among them, I would highlight the national campaign on the rights and duties of migrant workers and their families in Venezuela, undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and the national campaign to prevent trafficking in human beings promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and Justice. In addition, in August 2006, we drew up a national plan of action to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in human beings in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. To demonstrate the national Government's commitment to combating trafficking in humans, we organized a meeting of national authorities dealing with human trafficking under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS). That meeting was the first of its type held in the American hemisphere. It provided an opportunity for exchange of information and experience, political dialogue and cooperation among origin, transit and recipient countries on the subject of human trafficking, having due regard to the principle of co-responsibility among countries of origin, transit and destination, and with human rights as the central focus.

With respect to remittances, Venezuela believes that policies must be crafted and coordinated to reduce the difficulties involved in transferring remittances. It is also important to study the possibility of facilitating the creation of family microenterprises to help the families of migrant workers. However, we believe that remittances cannot and should not become the basis for development policies. We cannot forget that remittances are private transfers and that they cannot at any point be considered to be or substitute for Official Development Assistance.

Another problem that countries of origin should tackle is the problem of qualified and highly qualified migration. In that regard, we should study the possibility of implementing policies and mechanisms that stimulate the return of migrants and enable them to reintegrate more easily into their country of origin, thereby avoiding brain drain.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers that cooperation among Member States, whether bilateral, regional or multilateral, is crucial if we are to improve our management of the phenomenon of international migration.

As regards the Secretary-General's proposal to set up an intergovernmental consultative forum, Venezuela considers that that suggestion would mean creating a mechanism for far-reaching reflection on migration issues, but without binding decisions, which would enable our countries to engage in a dynamic and fruitful exchange of experience.

At the same time, we have to join forces to enhance the work that several bodies dealing with the subject of migration have been carrying out in recent years, and thus arrive at a more coherent approach.

Finally, we would like the conclusions of the High-level Dialogue to take into consideration progress achieved in migration issues in the South American area. We hope that the outcome of this Dialogue will truly be implemented to benefit migrants themselves.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya, chairman of the delegation of Nepal.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): Migration is one of the less understood and little discussed matters among issues associated with globalization. Its potential benefits, including its contribution to development, have yet to be fully understood.

Nepal's national experience also suggests that the impact of migration on development is not yet clear, though there is some positive correlation between the two. For instance, remittances generated by the Nepalese workers abroad now account for 11.7 per cent of gross domestic product, and have thus been among the factors that have contributed to the reduction of extreme poverty and unemployment.

International migration occurs because of push factors, such as poverty, and pull factors, such as the attraction to a better and productive life abroad. In other words, underdevelopment produces conditions for migration.

Mr. Tidjani (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If properly managed, migration can become a positive force in the world economy. If no active policy choices are made, it can lead to chaos, confusion and conflicts. Therefore, we must start a dialogue to allow freer access of migrant workers to the economies of developed countries. After all, human labour is just another factor of production and should be allowed to move freely just as capital, goods and services are allowed to do in the context of liberal trade and open economic policies.

Despite the positive contribution migrant workers make in the economies of countries of origin and receiving countries, they are mostly discounted as a burden to the economic and social system of receiving countries and a drain on the talent of sending countries.

Many migrant workers are exploited by unscrupulous intermediaries or employers. They are sometimes subject to discrimination in host societies, and in some cases, they are denied the rights they are entitled to under international conventions. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the regime for protection of the rights of migrants in all situations.

Many developed labour markets seek skilled migrant workers. When the few skilled people available in poorer countries leave for jobs overseas, development falls behind, thus creating conditions for more emigration.

Lately, the remittance has emerged as an innovative source of private household financing, but it can in no way be a substitute for official development assistance or for debt relief. The vulnerability of the migrant sector does not allow countries to become dependent on it as a source of revenue.

International policies and trade regimes, anti-human trafficking laws, immigration practices and provisions on security and terrorism have overshadowed the potential benefits of migration. We can achieve many of the objectives of these policies through better management of migration without creating hurdles to genuine migrant workers. We need to engage all relevant stakeholders, including migrants themselves, in an international framework of cooperation for achieving the full potential of migration as a driving force for development.

Sadly, this global dialogue on migration has been too little too late. It is marred with conflicting interests and interpretations. We need to come up with win-win solutions for both countries of origin and host countries, as well as for migrants themselves.

Like most other global issues, utilization of migration for its potential contribution to development requires a shared global responsibility, which has been one of the cardinal principles of cooperation in our times. We should endeavour to develop a global

compact for migration and development with shared commitments, specifically for opening up labour markets and adopting target migrant worker quotas, and shared responsibilities between migrants' countries of origin and countries of destination. Most importantly, we should institute a multilateral mechanism for dialogue to facilitate the better use of migration as a tool for development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hjálmar Hannesson, chairman of the delegation of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): We thank the Secretary General for his comprehensive and enlightening report and the emphasis he has placed on this important and highly relevant matter for the United Nations. We also welcome the organization of this High-level Dialogue and the efforts of the Secretary-General to put the issue of migration on the global agenda.

The report highlights the fact that a new era of mass international migration has recently begun. Iceland is acutely aware of this. Only 10 years ago, Iceland was one of the most homogeneous societies in the world. Today, the portion of our labour market occupied by immigrants is higher than that of most of our neighbours.

International migration can contribute in a positive manner to development and economic growth, if appropriately regulated and controlled. But if we are to reduce the negative effects on the migrants themselves, we must recognize the need to promote and protect their human rights.

Gender equality perspectives are highly important in migration, because gender inequality can be both the cause and the consequence of international migration. Promotion of gender equality will, therefore, help to reduce migration's negative impact.

I would like to highlight the fact mentioned in the report that cross-border movements of persons have become the main vehicle for greater participation by women in the export of services in developing countries, which is a positive side of increased international trade in services. The downside of it, however, is that the flexibility of labour can lead to loss of formal contracts, social security and other social benefits.

It is worrying that current trends in women's employment are headed in the wrong direction, with lower wages and deterioration in the terms and conditions of employment. One of the reasons is that women are more likely to find employment in the informal economy than are men.

Another challenge that is closely linked to migration is the rapid growth of human trafficking and smuggling. Attempts have been made to use Iceland as a country of transit on the route over the Atlantic, and my authorities have taken steps accordingly. Trafficking in human beings is a global problem, and as such needs to be dealt with by the international community as well as at the national level. Iceland has signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and we have emphasized the role of regional institutions in combating trafficking in human beings. We have also contributed actively to the anti-trafficking work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The fight against trafficking in human beings should be a priority for all, as most States are affected, either as countries of origin, countries of transit or countries of destination. It remains one of Iceland's priorities, and we have put considerable effort into raising public awareness on what such trafficking involves.

To conclude, I would like to state that I am certain that this High-level Dialogue will provide us with a better understanding of all aspects of migration and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Javad Amin Mansour, chairman of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ms. Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-first session, including the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. I am confident that, under her leadership, this gathering will be successful in its deliberations.

Before making my remarks, upon instruction from the capital, I have to express my Government's

regrets that the Iranian Minister of the Interior was unable to participate in this High-level Dialogue owing to the failure of the host country to issue an entry visa.

Now I will make my statement.

Although international migration occurs essentially as a result of decisions taken by individuals and families, it affects the relationship with the States concerned. International migration, due to its ever-increasing growth in terms of scale, scope and complexity, has become a phenomenon with global aspects. It poses new challenges that should be addressed appropriately and holistically. In addition, the undeniable inter-linkage between migration and development highlights the need to address the issue, bearing in mind its undeniable impact on the process of development of all countries of origin, transit and destination.

It goes without saying that the ongoing negotiations on migration should be aimed at minimizing its negative consequences and maximizing its benefits for all countries involved, as well as for the migrants themselves. In addressing this issue, a realistic and global vision is needed. One cannot and should not fail to consider the root causes of international migration.

Globalization, and its consequent strengthening of communication and increase in public awareness, have inevitably given rise to expectations and movements of people around the globe. Poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, lack of adequate investments, imbalances and inequalities in the international trading system, uncontrolled population growth, violence, discrimination and a wide gap in terms of well-being and development between developed and developing countries are among some of the other factors that affect migration.

An increasing number of female migrants and other vulnerable social groups, as well as the high risk inherent in the movement of such groups, add to the already complex aspects and deserve the international community's further attention.

It should be taken into account that almost all countries in the world face migration phenomena and fall in the categories of origin, destination and/or transit. Besides, migration is not just a South-South issue; it also occurs in the countries of the South. It is obvious that individual countries without bilateral, regional or international cooperation will not be able to manage this phenomenon appropriately or move in the right direction.

While struggling to address the issue of international migration, in order to minimize the negative consequences and maximize benefits for all, it should also be seen within the context of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In other words, we need to address migration and development with a view to achieving the MDGs. The full participation and engagement of all countries in negotiations, in a transparent and constructive manner, will contribute to the achievement of fruitful results.

Another requirement that should be taken into account during the negotiations is the appropriate management of migration at the national, regional and international levels. Building national capacities, particularly in developing countries, by establishing the necessary infrastructures; creating or modifying relevant legal regimes in a coordinated and coherent manner; formulating national strategies on migration; exchanging information, experience and best practices; and allocating adequate resources to such measures will help the international community meet the new challenges posed by migration.

Undoubtedly, migrants play an important role in the process of development in all countries. Migrants in general, and skilled and highly educated migrants in particular, contribute effectively to the process of development in destination countries. Likewise, the transfer of technical knowledge and capital to the countries of origin by migrants is effective in the development of those countries. Therefore, the removal of obstacles that migrants face in the transfer of knowledge and expertise in destination countries, facilitating and lowering the cost of remittance transfers, and enhancing their safety are determinant in the process of development.

Being of a country of origin, transit and destination, and while suffering greatly from the negative consequences of migration, my Government attaches great importance to the ongoing negotiations and cooperation at all levels. Iran, which is located in a strategic area linking the Persian Gulf to Central Asia and South Asia to Mediterranean countries, can play a key in regional cooperation on migration. I should like to highlight here some measures that my

country has resorted to in order to address the question of migration.

With the cooperation of the International Organization for Migration, Iran has embarked on enhancing national capacity in dealing with migration. A new law, entitled "Combating human trafficking", was adopted by the Iranian Parliament in July 2004. A national cooperation mechanism has been set up in the Iranian Interior Ministry, composed of the representatives of all relevant ministries. At the regional level, Iran participated in the quadripartite ministerial meeting on fighting illegal migration and trafficking in persons, held between Greece, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in Athens in December 2005.

In conclusion, launching the initiative of a trilateral dialogue on migration management among Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan is another step we have taken in the region for further cooperation among the countries involved. With the implementation of further projects in the region aimed at sharing expertise and know-how and enhancing capacity on migration, countries will be able to improve their understanding of migration and migration management. I reiterate that strengthening regional cooperation is a key to success for international efforts and cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aboubacar Diallo, chairman of the delegation of Guinea.

Mr. Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure and privilege for the delegation that I have the honour to lead to take the floor at the High-level Dialogue that brings us together here and the importance of which is clear to us all.

I should like in particular to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, whose daily, persistent efforts help us to achieve our common vision of the world. The initiative to organize this meeting and the report which he has submitted demonstrate the far-sightedness and lucidity with which he approaches this critical issue. My delegation fully approves the report's diagnoses and the proposed measures it contains.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In adopting the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations set itself the difficult task of meeting many challenges, the nature and purpose of which require determined efforts on our part to do more to establish the basis for a genuine development cooperation policy. Among those challenges, the problem of international migration and development is undoubtedly a priority.

Today more than ever before, the immense opportunities opened by globalization, migration and the growth of information and communication technologies unite hundreds of millions of people throughout the global village in a common fate. Those far-reaching global changes require us to seek together adequate responses to the many challenges we face. We must also bear in mind the no less complex underlying challenges.

In that context, it is clear that only active, realistic and pragmatic solidarity that integrates the needs of development, security and international cooperation will furnish a long-term solution to the control and management of migratory flows. We are convinced that, through this High-level Dialogue, we must contribute to establishing, progressively and in the common interests of the countries of origin, transit and destination, an innovative and effective partnership to incorporate the following elements seamlessly into development policies and programmes: enhanced national capacity-building and migration policies; the essential elements for international standards on international migration; the involvement and participation of international organizations, the private sector and civil society in this debate; enhanced cooperation and coordination of efforts between the United Nations, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration in order to establish appropriate machinery to improve the coherence and interactivity of international migration and development; and exploring and enhancing the potential for the development of diasporas.

Member States must ensure in particular that migration follows a legal path. They must protect the rights of migrants and prevent their exploitation, particularly the vulnerable among them, and counteract crimes related to the illicit trafficking of migrants and the trade in persons.

Governments must reassert their commitment to meeting those objectives. In order to do so, they must establish a strategy based on co-development. In that vein, we must explore and develop the potential of national diasporas as engines of and added value for

development and cooperation efforts. In many ways, my delegation sees this as an opportunity for innovative thinking and a promising prospect that must be taken into account in poverty reduction strategies and in our countries' development policies and programmes. Despite the international commitments to increasing the level and quality of official development assistance, it is increasingly clear that it will never be sufficient to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Today, new mechanisms to mobilize resources for development financing are indispensable to complen.ent official development assistance. In that respect, it is clearer than ever that the resources monopolized by co-development and decentralized cooperation often exceed official development assistance. Given that fact, the Government of Guinea has established innovative financing mechanisms, particularly by mobilizing resources monopolized by co-development and decentralized cooperation and directing them towards finance for development. Clearly, much remains to be done to ensure the integration of international migration into co-development strategies.

At the national level, initiatives should enjoy greater coordination and better cohesion between migration policies and development policies. At the international level, a framework structured around co-development objectives should produce innovative initiatives aimed at promoting the benefits of international migration, including through: facilitating remittances, reducing their cost and ensuring that they promote development, and strengthening links between countries of origin and their expatriates in terms of business and investment knowledge.

The President returned to the Chair.

Here, my delegation wishes to recall the political purpose of this debate: to strengthen the institutional framework and enhance the resources of a partnership that we would like to be universal, integrating all the aspects and dimensions of international migration. Moreover, given the temptation on the part of some to seek security through isolationism and the fierce determination of others to profit from the advantages of migration, we must stress that today there is no miracle cure for the phenomenon of migration. However, there are realistic, pragmatic solutions aimed at making migration a very valuable tool to promote cooperation in development.

We hope that the international community, by resolutely following the path of appropriate, harmonious and mutually advantageous management of migration, will forcefully reaffirm its will to take resolute action against poverty, persecution, rejection and stigmatization and to promote political, operational and consensual dialogue on international migration.

With a long history shaped by a tradition of tolerance, the Republic of Guinea has always been a country of destination, transit and intermingling of peoples, thanks to migration from many lands. That is why the Guinean Government attaches particular importance to the close links between migration and development.

In that context, and following this Dialogue, we plan to hold a national forum on co-development and decentralized cooperation in March 2007. The forum will bring together national development actors, technical and financial partners and representatives of the Guinean diaspora. Its objective will be to provide the country with effective policies, strategies and instruments to mobilize the additional financing necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The delegation of Guinea hopes to have the support of the international community to ensure the success of this national initiative.

Finally, my delegation reaffirms its full support and full cooperation with regard to the process underway. We are convinced that the scope of the challenges fully justifies such support, so that the issue of migration can be considered in the universal context that it deserves, from the vast perspective afforded to the international community.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Al Araimi, chairman of the delegation of Oman.

Mr. Al Araimi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset, on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, to thank the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for his report on international migration and development (A/60/871), which serves as an important working paper for this High-level Dialogue. It raises a number of issues and sets out guidelines on migration and its impact on social and economic development in countries of origin and countries of destination. The

report also emphasizes the protection of the rights of migrants and the importance of international and regional cooperation aimed at ensuring collective action on the phenomenon of migration so as to maximize its benefits and promote development at the national, regional and international levels.

My country wishes to emphasize the following points.

First, every State has the sovereign right to regulate the entry and exit of workers from and into its territory, to determine who can enter the country and to devise policies and mechanisms regulating the residence of those workers in accordance with its own laws and regulations.

Secondly, countries of origin must cooperate with countries of destination to facilitate legal migration and combat illegal migration.

Thirdly, a country of destination has the right to control its labour market so that its own unemployed citizens can find appropriate employment without competition from migrant workers who have entered the country illegally. Likewise, migration should not increase the unemployment rate in countries of destination. That means, of course, that if we are to benefit from migration, we must regulate it.

Fourthly, migrant workers enjoy higher wages in countries of destination. However, such countries can also help to increase workers' professional skills in the private sector through training, especially for those of limited skills. Thus, they can improve their skills and develop their own productive capacities.

Fifthly, in the Sultanate of Oman there are many immigrants who have come to work but not to establish permanent or long-term residency. That contributes to the long-term development and benefit of our country and of the countries of origin, and to the workers and to their families as well.

Finally, the Sultanate of Oman believes that countries of origin must increase the awareness of their emigrants so that they understand the laws and values of the country of destination. Countries of destination must also respect immigrants' social and cultural diversity and combat the illicit trading in humans. Furthermore, countries of origin and countries of destination must cooperate to control migration, since that is in the interests of both parties.

It is the responsibility of the United Nations, international organizations and specialized agencies to coordinate the positions of various countries on migration in order to make it an essential and positive factor in sustainable development at the international, regional and national levels.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad, chairman of the delegation of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are extremely pleased to see you, Madam, a distinguished diplomat from the sisterly country of Bahrain, presiding over the General Assembly at this important session. Your election to that post is an honour for you and your country, which continues to be a pioneer in the Arab Gulf, in the rest of the Arab world and in the international arena. Your country and the other Arab Gulf States are safe havens for immigrants from many other countries — including my own — and have become a second home for them.

I should like to thank the United Nations, in particular the Secretariat, for this important initiative on international immigration and development, which has made that issue one of the concerns and focuses of the international community. This initiative is very important because it deepens global understanding of the issues related to migration, which is one of the oldest human activities, and of the important role played by many human migrations in shaping history, economic life and the common human heritage. In this respect, we would like to align ourselves with the statement made by the Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Throughout its history, our country's particular geographical position has given rise to considerable migration, and the Sudan has long been a country of origin, destination and transit. We are proud of the children of the Sudan who have contributed to the construction and development of many brotherly and friendly countries. At the same time, we are proud of those who have come to our country, either on their way to the Holy Land or as residents who have become part of our social fabric. This has given our country its unity in diversity and the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

At this High-level Dialogue undertaken on International Migration and Development, the issue of migration goes beyond development. Economic

indicators indeed show that migration is linked with development. But it is more: migration is an important and versatile tool to increase interaction between members of the international human community and to bring States, peoples and cultures together.

Thus, our view of migration should not be limited to development. The migrant is not just a milch cow sending remittances or an engine to drive the economy. Migrants are human beings whose aspirations and ambitions weave a network of human and cultural interactions. We believe that development should be only one aspect of migration. Our consideration of migration should also address the individual's moral and material concerns. A joint effort among countries of origin, receiving countries and the international community is needed for successful migration that benefits everybody. Migrants have economic and social rights, such as the right to educate their children, to maintain links with their homelands and to carry out unhindered the various transactions they need to undertake. In exchange, migrants are obliged to respect the rules and laws of the host country.

Although migration is a personal choice, the international community must nonetheless address its root causes. This puts the role of the United Nations at the forefront in tackling poverty, in providing resources for development, in addressing the problem of indebtness, in promoting cooperation in the management of disasters and crises and in engaging in rehabilitation and reconstruction in countries and societies that have emerged from struggles, conflicts and wars.

In this context, we believe there is a potential for bilateral cooperation through the signing of protocols and labour agreements to deal with migration issues. We would like to commend regional cooperation organizations for their cooperation on migration issues. The African Union has integrated this topic into its programmes to buttress the work of African economic bodies and continental economic integration mechanisms. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) also reflects an interest in the African diaspora.

At the same time, we are concerned that, alongside the international focus on migration issues, xenophobia and violence against foreigners exist. We also see a lack of political will on many migratory issues, as well as the application of double standards. At a time when international trade agreements call for freedom of movement for goods and persons, some countries are becoming more restrictive, especially towards those seeking asylum.

We believe that this High-level Dialogue will strengthen international efforts to deal with complex issues in a comprehensive way in order to yield benefits for all and to serve everybody's interests. My country, with its vast experience of migration as a country of origin, destination and transit, has addressed the issue through carefully considered institutional measures. Government bodies are working harder to facilitate employment for migrants, and we have established a high-level body to service Sudanese in the diaspora, help resolve the problems they encounter and link them with their homeland. An international conference was held in Khartoum last month for Sudanese working abroad in the mass media and as creative writers.

To conclude, we want to emphasize our appreciation for the holding of this important Dialogue, which establishes joint responsibility to formulate solutions that will promote sustainable development and facilitate the movement of persons, legal migration and respect for the rights and dignity of migrants. Beyond efforts to emphasize institutional frameworks to address migration issues, we believe that the United Nations has the potential to work towards launching an international decade to strengthen cooperation on migration and to declare an international day of migrants in appreciation for the great national, regional and international efforts that have been made on migration issues. We hope that our deliberations here will have a successful outcome.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Atoki Ileka, chairman of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, the head of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the sixty-first session of the General Assembly will soon have the opportunity to convey to you our Republic's warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the Assembly.

Speaking in the context of the 2005 World Summit and the recent Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development held in mid-July in Rabat, this High-level Dialogue on

International Migration and Development underlines once again how helpless nations are if they try to act alone and how important it is to seek solutions together to important problems with transnational implications.

Today we must note that migration has become a global problem. We therefore need a global approach that integrates the security, economic, cultural and financial and legislative aspects, because migration spares no country. My country can, therefore, only be gratified to see the United Nations so clearly spell out the relationship between international migration and development.

Our country, long a country of immigration because of the potential of its land and what lies beneath, regularly sees its mining areas invaded by clandestine workers from all over. Conversely, it is not only young people without qualifications who are leaving our country in search of better horizons; we also note a brain drain. Our doctors, engineers and teachers go into voluntary exile to seek a life abroad.

Given that situation, we can see how complex migratory flows are. But certain unchanging lessons can be learned. First of all, we need to raise awareness and educate people to keep some potential migrants in their own lands, because the disappointments they encounter abroad are so great.

Secondly, our struggle to stop migratory flows is doomed to failure without measures to repair dysfunctional labour markets and create conditions for development that will convince people — young people in particular — to remain at home.

Thirdly, uncontrolled migration has a negative impact on countries of destination. An illegal migrant encountering obstacles to social integration can spiral into criminality and delinquency when faced with precarious conditions.

Finally, migration is a factor of destabilization, not only for the transit or destination countries, but also for the countries of origin, in particular because of the brain drain it entails. For countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, precarious conditions, poverty, unemployment among young graduates, underdevelopment and a need for material success all constitute the fundamental reasons for migration.

Despite the negative aspects mentioned, migration can provide added value that we would be wrong not to take advantage of. For example, it is evident that in some countries of destination, the contribution made by migrant doctors, engineers, professors and other qualified workers makes it possible to solve a number of problems. At the same time, the remittances sent back to their country of origin are a non-negligible source of financial assistance to those countries. One could, therefore, consider this economic fact to be a positive element of immigration and one that should be optimized.

In the context mainly of our relations with the West, the equation of migration and development brings out the need for consensual and collective management of immigration, in harmony with the need for a significant effort to achieve economic development in the countries of origin, in cooperation with the countries of destination and transit and with all due regard for the interests of all concerned. Over and above security concerns regarding the protection of the borders of countries of destination, the remedy to uncontrolled migration lies in the promotion of development within the countries of origin. We should invest in co-development projects and support for developmental non-governmental organizations and small enterprises in order to stop immigration flows at the source.

The Congolese Government is happy to participate in this High-level Dialogue in order to find realistic and lasting solutions to the major problems caused in the world by migratory flows and in particular by illegal immigration. We must act on the causes and the catalysts of migration. The limits of arguments based on a desire to clamp down are becoming increasingly evident. The preference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo accordingly goes to efforts to convince potential immigrants to stay at home. We support the idea that economic and political stabilization in our countries constitute a structural response to the migration problems in Africa.

It is indispensable for States to continue to explore ways and means of strengthening the link between migration and development, so that properly managed migration can help us attain the Millennium Development Goals, in particular by improving dialogue between the Government, the migrants and their families. In thanking the Secretary-General for his report (A/60/871), my delegation therefore welcomes his proposal to set up a standing forum on migration issues that could serve as a framework within which to

pursue the debate, exchange ideas and experiences and enable Governments to study relevant policies and their impact on development. The Democratic Republic of the Congo fully supports this proposal and welcomes the offer made by the Kingdom of Belgium to host the first meeting of the forum next year in Brussels.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Sesay, chairman of the delegation of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Sesay (Sierra Leone): The delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone wishes to commend the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/871), which highlights the complexity, new dimension and paradigm shift on migration issues. We want to thank the organizers of this conference, which we find to be very timely and extremely important. Please accept our gratitude, Madam President, for the excellent manner in which you are conducting the affairs of this session. My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Minister of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

International migration is an age-old phenomenon. It supported industrialization, modernization and demographic transition in Europe. Today, it is a paradox that strict visa requirements and xenophobia exist in many countries, when former destination areas of the world are trying to industrialize and modernize. Yet, it is in those same nations that most of the demographic growth dynamics shaping the world population are taking place.

Forty per cent of the population of Sierra Leone is under 15 years of age. Unemployment is widespread, and the situation may be worse for young women. Their contributions are not sufficiently remunerated even though they work for longer hours, taking care of the home, the elderly and the sick, while undertaking farm work.

From the perspective of the individual young person and his family, immigration has been seen as an escape from deprivation and poverty. Migrant remittances have been used to pay bills for immediate household consumption needs and, in a few instances, investments like small businesses or construction of family dwellings. But the volume of remittances from the Sierra Leonean diaspora is certainly far below those reported in Asian countries or other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Sierra Leone now stands at the crossroads of a major phase of reconstruction and development. As the country implements its first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, it does not have the number of doctors, nurses, engineers, scientists, lecturers and other professionals and skilled personnel required in the process. The limited numbers available continue to migrate to countries of the North in search of a better life.

To ameliorate this situation, the Government has put together a Senior Executive Service scheme that aims to attract highly qualified manpower to all ministries, departments and agencies. In the interim, a stopgap transitional measure has been worked out with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration. Nationals from Sierra Leone with relevant expertise in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are being encouraged to return and render services for up to 30 months, without losing any status or benefits in their countries of residence. Other, similar initiatives are being developed, and we call on the countries of the North especially to participate in them. It is hoped that during their sojourn, the members of the Sierra Leonean diaspora may become interested in returning and further contributing to the ensuing development work in the country.

In closing, I would stress that this is the time for real action. Initiatives like these and regional consultative processes between sending and receiving countries are some of the best practices that an increasingly globalizing world should adopt — if only to make international migration a win-win game. In addition, unless the poverty situations in our countries are solved and the gap between rich and poor countries minimized, it will be difficult to make any meaningful impression on the global South-North migration trend. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals will also be difficult in many of our countries, because even the requisite human resource base is eroded and development planning and the implementation of plans are a problem because of lack of capacity.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pascal Gayama, chairman of the delegation of Congo.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, although I am very strongly tempted to congratulate you, I will leave that honour to my head of State or Minister for Foreign Affairs, who will be

attending this meeting of the General Assembly. I am sure that it will be done eloquently.

Our debate concerns a burning issue whose tragic consequences are witnessed daily in the media. However, historians will confirm that migration is as old as the world itself — hence the role and status of the International Organization for Migration. We wish to commend it for the work it has done in preparation for today's debate.

Similarly, we would like to reaffirm the conclusions of the meetings held at Rabat and Algiers, particularly the Common African Position emanating from the Banjul Summit of the African Union (AU) last July, which dealt with the issue in all its aspects and made a decisive contribution with regard to the measures that need to be undertaken to face this major challenge to the international community.

It is a fact that no one can stop migration, particularly through current palliative measures. Even within each of our States, we witness the unstoppable and unending movement of peoples seeking happiness. Rural exodus cannot be stopped until cities lose their attraction for village dwellers.

It is the same at the international level, as shown clearly by the example of the American continent, which in the past has received migrants from all continents. Indeed, the case of America is a positive example — that of a strong State that is the result of immigration, a new world that has attracted migrants seeking wealth and well-being.

Today the problem of migration brings us back to the same concerns which underpinned the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals, including the creation of a new world. Achieving those Goals is, we believe, the best guarantee for putting an end to the tragic situation prevailing on the border between Africa and its neighbour, Europe, and between Latin America and its neighbour, North America, with continents pitted one against the other. This brings to mind the old saying, "If the mountain will not go to the man, then the man must go to the mountain".

The conclusions that we drew last year with respect to the review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration are, we believe, still very topical. We must fully understand the need for co-development. The facts on the ground make it clear that, for those who would emigrate, it is a question of survival, and that will be the case so as long as inequalities and gaps exist between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor individuals.

The consequences, as we all can see, is a desperate quest for real or imagined happiness, obtained through a potential visa or through an illegal network that benefits organized crime.

The world needs peace. As long as hotbeds of tension remain, and as long as peace is threatened in any country or region, there will continue to be strong pressure for migration.

The Common African Position adopted by our Governments in the light of this High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development reflects the concerns expressed at Banjul, the Gambia, last July, by the African Union Summit, on a problem that will continue to grow in the coming years. Indeed, we must better address a phenomenon that is becoming a new, global twenty-first-century version of the migrations that took place from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, as was said earlier.

Greater integration of migration into development policies and programmes is therefore an absolute necessity, so that African countries do not suffer from a brain drain or from a lack of expertise in domains that are essential to its development.

Africa does appreciate, however, the contributions of expatriates, who send resources that contribute to the social investments that need to be made for the benefit of its peoples. Thus the Secretary-General rightly stressed in his report on the work of the Organization the fact that

> "remittances from Africans working abroad had overtaken foreign direct investment in the period 2000-2003." *(A/61/1, para. 49)*

For the pan-African movement, which has already made the African diaspora the "sixth region" of Africa, it is an issue of creating a dynamic that includes States, the private sector and civil society that can promote the transfer of technology and know-how at the levels needed to ensure sustainable development.

The Congolese delegation would like here to pay tribute to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the work it is doing to support Africa in the quest to more effectively and productively address the phenomenon of migration. The African Union should

step up its cooperation with that organization in order to translate into reality the idea of an international decade for migration and development, an idea which has previously been referred to in a number of forums.

In that respect, my country would like to discuss with the IOM the possibility of convening, in Brazzaville, Congo, an initial series of international meetings to consider what such a decade would involve.

As concerns our views on other aspects of the issue, we associate ourselves with the statements made from this very rostrum, inter alia by South Africa's Minister of the Interior on behalf of the Group of 77, whose views we concur with as concerns migration and development. We also take note of the report provided us by the Secretary-General.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. George Olago Owuor, chairman of the delegation of Kenya.

Mr. Olago Owuor (Kenya): Madam President, the Kenyan delegation congratulates you on your election and on your assumption of the responsibilities of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

The Kenyan delegation wishes also to align itself with the statement delivered by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the Secretary-General for his useful and enlightening report on this subject. Kenya underscores the close link between international migration and development. International migration is not new. However, there have been drastic changes in the direction, numbers and push-and-pull factors in the countries of origin, transit and destination. These have been caused by improvements in information and communication technologies and by personal desires for exposure and development.

Equally important is the attention given and value attached to international migration by individuals and nation-States, motivated by the inherent potential and threats associated with international migration. It is our hope that the interaction in this High-level Dialogue will shed some light on these issues and demystify some of the perceptions and misunderstandings associated with international migration.

International migration has more closely been associated with globalization and liberalization. It has been observed that globalization has not benefited all countries equally, neither has international migration. Hence, one crucial question we should ask ourselves is, "how can benefits of international migration be equally shared between the parties involved?"

Quite often the world has looked at the benefits of migration purely from the monetary perspective. While remittances may constitute one of the important benefits, they may not give the full picture. The nature and magnitude of remittances, especially those going to the developing countries, are not known, because many countries do not have either the capacity or mechanisms to capture the flow of remittances.

Other benefits of international migration to the countries of origin may include the transfer of technology, exposure to other cultures and opportunities, and the acquisition of knowledge, talent and skills, among other things. The benefit ultimately depends on whether the immigrants maintain links with their countries of origin and whether they are facilitated adequately to interact and remit some of their acquisitions.

Immigrants participate in the development of receiving countries in various ways. They provide a labour force, a demand for consumer goods and services and much more.

However, there are numerous negative aspects associated with international migration that need attention. In some cases, international migration has been associated with insecurity and many forms of illegal activity. Environmental degradation and the strain on economic, social and cultural traits and infrastructure have been seen as some of the negative aspects.

We are encouraged by the proposal to have an international forum on this issue. The envisaged forum on migration must be institutionalized within the United Nations and other regional and international forums. The key issues that need detailed examination in such a forum include human rights, gender aspects of international migration, security, the link between refugees and migration, sociocultural aspects of international migration and regional and international aspects of international migration.

The Kenya delegation believes that this High-level Dialogue will pave the way for enhanced collaboration, cooperation and future interaction at the regional and international levels on this very important subject. We remain committed and ready to engage in this debate for the benefit of all peoples and nations concerned.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, chairman of the delegation of Senegal.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes the General Assembly's clear and timely decision to place such a relevant issue as international migration and development on the agenda of the sixty-first session. This is recognition of the invaluable contribution of migrants to development to their societies, both in the host countries and origin countries, even if it turns out that migration is also a source of concern.

This meeting should enable us to set out important markers for more concerted and more fruitful international cooperation with regard to the management of migration. Here, as elsewhere, unilateralism can only bring tension.

If the main reason that leads those considering emigration is to seek better social well-being, it is also the case that the effects of globalization and economic liberalization have accentuated that fact and have led to unprecedented movements of populations.

In Senegal, sectors such as fisheries, agriculture and food-processing industries that provided employment in the past are now facing the repercussions of that liberalization and the distortions of the global market. In consequence, those sectors are being deserted, which means growing unemployment and declining productivity and income. In that context, any efforts to stem the movement of populations — particularly of young graduates and workers, whether they be skilled or unemployed — towards regions more favourable to their development could be ineffective.

The financial windfall that comes from the savings that migrants inject into their countries of origin is not a panacea for development, because in most cases it does not lead to productive investment. It can even have negative effects by placing countries that enjoy these remittances in a situation of dependence. The impact of the remittances on economic progress is minimal compared with the losses caused by the brain drain, in terms of insufficient human and intellectual resources and skilled labour. It also means that there is less investment in developing such resources. To this must be added the frustration experienced by those people who are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and development by health and school systems and an economy that cannot meet their needs.

Thus the relationship between development and the availability of human resources puts the brain drain at the heart of the problem of migration and development. In a word, it is the very concept of sustainable development that needs to be re-examined through the prism of the movements of individuals in a globalized world, in the same way as the movements of goods, services and capital.

In this process Senegal has set up a project called "Return to Agriculture (REVA)", it was recently launched by President Abdoulaye Wade to encourage integrated development, particularly in those zones that are sources of migration. Other initiatives have been taken, such as promoting access to microfinance, the creation of a fund for the promotion of the youth and an agency for development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Documentation on REVA is available in this Hall.

Part of the aforementioned project includes Project Tokten. This project has been defined with the United Nations Development Programme to involve skills of our expatriates in the national development process. Also, in 2001, an action plan was adopted for the return of emigrants and their reinsertion in the economic life of the country.

In the context of the crucial and paramount role of national efforts, I would also like to highlight the importance of international partnerships, which are becoming all the more essential as we witness the resurgence of illegal migration, an increasingly tragic human reality.

Working within its own resource constraints to contain this phenomenon, which is now of unprecedented proportions, Senegal has launched a joint operation with the countries of the European Union (EU), in the context of the EU Agency for border cooperation, known as Frontex. In this connection, in August an agreement was signed with Spain that provides for the surveillance of the coast by

sea, air and land; these operations are beginning to bear fruit.

Furthermore, a framework convention is being negotiated with France to ensure joint management of migratory flows between our two countries. However, we stress that the management of international migration must not, and cannot, be limited to security measures. We cannot hold back the ocean with our arms. Thus the "Rabat spirit" was born, following the Euro-African conference that took place in that city on 10 and 11 July, at which a Declaration and Action Plan were adopted with a view to providing African and European countries with the means to better understand and control the phenomenon of migration.

We must acknowledge that no policy of prevention is likely to succeed if the necessary conditions are not in place to ensure that potential emigrants stay in their own countries. We must synergize our efforts to combat poverty and unemployment, which are growing exponentially in many sectors.

Senegal is convinced that any initiative aimed at ensuring that migration serves development must be based on the principles of shared responsibility, common interests and co-development. It must also take account of the following requirements. First, we must combat illegal emigration, because it leads to trafficking and other abuses and can give rise to insecurity and tension. We must enhance operational and logistical cooperation so as to improve border controls and reduce the massive flows of irregular migrants, which have recently provoked a xenophobic reaction in host countries. For its part, Senegal has chosen to take a zero-tolerance approach to illegal emigration.

Secondly, we must promote legal migration and stabilize migratory flows, particularly through concerted information and communication campaigns. This is the best way to eliminate negative effects. It should be said that the systematic refusal to issue visas, which causes certain people to feel that there is no way for them to visit other countries to undertake normal professional activities or to learn about other cultures, can prompt some of them to view themselves as victims, to consider desperate measures and to take regrettable steps. Mafia-like gangs operating in both countries of origin and countries of destination exploit those feelings, and they must be combated vigorously.

Thirdly, we must fully accept and respect the rights and dignity of migrants and their families so as to strengthen and make credible the process of jointly managing migration. The idea of co-development will be meaningless if migrants cannot enjoy their rights or do not have an opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities through the effective respect by all States of relevant international norms. These include the right to health and education, as well as to protection for vulnerable social groups, in particular women and young people.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome the Secretary-General's significant proposals. My country fully supports them, particularly those relating to the establishment of a standing global consultative forum to follow up this process. If that recommendation is implemented, the forum would be a useful complement to the exchange and cooperation mechanisms at the bilateral and interregional levels that already exist.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Bishop Nicholas Di Marzio, chairman of the observer delegation of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Bishop Di Marzio (Holy See): It is clear from our discussions over the past two days that migration is an essential element of interdependence and exchange among nations and forms part of the phenomenon of globalization. It places people in a global dimension and in new relationships of interdependence, while the growth of the global economy depends more and more on international migration. But migration is also a great source of human concern, since it involves the lives and the dignity of so many hundreds of millions of people.

One of the most controversial elements of this topic is irregular migration. The Holy See recognizes the sovereign right of nations to determine who may enter and who may remain in a given State. At the same time, States have a grave duty to protect the rights of all persons, be they regular or irregular migrants, and to cooperate in readmitting those who are obliged to or wish to return — whether voluntarily or involuntarily — to their home countries. A migrant's legal status is quite separate from his or her human dignity, since all, without exception, are endowed with inalienable rights, which can be neither violated nor ignored.

Both sending and receiving States have a responsibility to respect and implement commitments

to international human rights law to ensure the protection of all migrants. It falls to States to guarantee the rights of individuals; the issue, however, tends not to be a lack of law, but rather a lack of implementation.

As for authorized and long-term migrants, their full integration is required in order to enhance social harmony and cohesion and to maximize the contributions that migrants make to their new societies. Migrants should respect the cultural and religious identities of the host nations and the rights and duties conferred by citizenship. They should be encouraged to integrate socially into, as well as to contribute economically to, the receiving countries. The public perception of migrants also needs to be improved through courageous political leadership and much more informed and dispassionate media coverage.

One particular concern of the Holy See is the situation of migrants who are forced to migrate against their will — not only refugees, but also those who are trafficked, many times for immoral purposes and human slavery.

Of all the issues before States at this High-level Dialogue, perhaps the most difficult is that of the governance of migration. Important national, regional and international decisions in areas such as development, trade and labour markets are rarely considered in terms of their impact on migration. More effective consultation between Governments and other stakeholders is required if coherent practices are to be developed. In this regard, it is our belief that, if States were to cooperate more broadly with one another, they would be exercising rather than diminishing their sovereignty.

So far, progress has been made in developing informal consultative processes among Governments at the regional level, but my delegation agrees with those who believe that the time is ripe to consider developing a global consultative process that would allow Governments that wish to do so to forge constructive approaches to transform the positive potential of international migration for development into a reality. This global process would build on regional processes and serve as the link between Governments and the Global Migration Group, in order to ensure that the activities of the United Nations, together with those of the International Organization for Migration, are mutually reinforcing and add up to a sum greater than all of their parts. It would be a standing body, involving Governments with first-hand experience in addressing migration challenges. In order to accommodate concerns, we believe that such a forum should be States-driven, voluntary and non-binding in its consultations. In this context, we welcome the offer to hold a meeting next year in Belgium and look forward to this initiative.

To sum up, root causes must be tackled so that people are not obliged to leave home in order to find decent work; migrant protection, especially of refugees and those who are trafficked or smuggled, must be better addressed; and regularization is needed for those who deserve it or who give their contribution to the host society, even if they have arrived in an undocumented or unauthorized manner, in order to foster an environment capable of overcoming the persistent phenomena of discrimination, violence, human trafficking and xenophobia.

Only through international collaboration and an honest assessment at home of the benefits of migration, will this phenomenon be addressed in a way that is decent and humane.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio, chairman of the delegation of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Dall'Oglio (International Organization for Migration): In the view of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ensuring that migration is a positive force for development involves two important elements: first, consultation and dialogue on migration; and secondly, concrete, results-oriented activities.

Our organization firmly believes that dialogue and consultation are the most effective means to advance understanding and international cooperation on migration. At the bilateral level, the IOM facilitates and supports cooperation agreements in areas such as labour migration and irregular migration. At the regional level, IOM actively promotes, supports and participates in regional dialogue on migration, through the regional consultative processes. IOM either serves as the secretariat for or provides significant technical and policy support to such processes on every continent. Based on our experience, we would strongly endorse proposals for greater cross-fertilization among regional consultative processes, for example through periodic meetings of process heads. We would be prepared to assist if requested.

At the global level, IOM and its membership launched the International Dialogue on Migration in the IOM Council in 2001, in fulfilment of IOM's constitutional mandate to provide a forum to States as well as international and other organizations for the exchange of views and experiences, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination of efforts on international migration issues. Should the global forum of States on migration and development proposed by the Secretary-General be established, the Global Migration Group (GMG) could serve as the forum's secretariat. During its meeting earlier this month, GMG agencies agreed that the GMG would consider any request for support which might come out of the High-level Dialogue.

The second important element in realizing the development potential of migration is to identify and support more concrete measures to make migration work for development. IOM has two specific, action-oriented proposals that we hope can help turn the goodwill of this High-level Dialogue into practical outcomes.

The first, the International Migration and Development Initiative, would facilitate capacity-building for safe, legal, humane and orderly participation in the global labour market. A better-regulated market would substantially strengthen migrants' rights and dignity, and improve working and living conditions. The proposed initiative also includes concrete measures to invest in human resource development and to better prepare workers for overseas employment.

The second proposal is to create a global research network on development and migration policy. This network would engage existing research networks, Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. The network would have a capacity-building element to enhance the competence of national researchers, policy makers and other Government officials in developing countries. Overall, this proposal seeks to assist both developing and developed countries to produce migration research and evaluations that are policy-relevant, timely and aimed at improving development outcomes.

In the lead-up to the High-level Dialogue, IOM also identified seven key messages, which were accompanied by suggestions on specific ways the High-level Dialogue could contribute to moving the issues forward. Key among them is mainstreaming migration into development planning agendas and capacity-building, to deal more effectively with a global labour market. Copies of those messages are available here today, and we were pleased to see that many of them have been seriously addressed at this gathering.

Let me close by stating that the High-level Dialogue has already achieved success by increasing international focus on migration and development issues. The momentum created by the High-level Dialogue should not be lost. IOM looks forward to playing an active role in whatever High-level Dialogue follow-up Member States decide to undertake. In this regard, IOM is already engaged with Secretary-General Annan in a constructive dialogue on ways and means to further improve cooperation between the United Nations and IOM under the guidance of our respective memberships.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Florence Mugasha, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Mrs. Mugasha (Commonwealth Secretariat): The Commonwealth is delighted to take part in the first-ever High-level Dialogue on migration and development. We are 53 countries on five continents; we account for one third of the world's population, one quarter of its countries and one fifth of its trade. We are rich and poor, of every colour and creed. Our Commonwealth map is lined with the movements of people who left their homes for new opportunities in education and in employment. In a fast-globalizing world, these movements have continued on a large scale.

In the Commonwealth, we are fully cognizant of the fact that on one hand, migrants are agents of devotement. They provide benefits to their countries of destination and their countries of origin. Yet, on the other hand, we know that the challenge is to manage migration and to ensure that the needs of the international labour market are fully met. Managing migration means incorporating it into national poverty-reduction strategies and into the ways in which we commit ourselves to meeting the global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We need to appreciate that migration and education, migration and human rights, migration and health and migration and business are all linked.

It is hard to quantify some of the other benefits of international migration, but they are by no means less important. These include the growth in skills through the movement of labour and management, the promotion of political, economic and social values and increases in foreign direct investment. For every positive statistic about migration, there is also a negative side. The challenge, therefore, is for us to establish a workable equilibrium. We cannot be complacent, because the countries which lose professional migrants and the countries which receive them both have responsibilities.

The Commonwealth's unique contribution to the migration debate has codified these responsibilities. In 2003, we developed a Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers for use by its members. There are examples of developed and developing countries using it together, such as the United Kingdom and South Africa, and of developing countries entering into agreements together, such as Kenya and Namibia. The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently developing its own code, drawing a great deal of inspiration from the Commonwealth model.

This was followed in 2004 by the Commonwealth Protocol for the Recruitment of Teachers, which sought to balance the right of teachers to migrate internationally against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems and to prevent the exploitation of the scarce human resources of poor countries. The Protocol is being discussed by regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, and it has also been recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization. Indeed, the Protocol has become a reference framework for countries beyond the Commonwealth. We are proud of the fact that we have been able to introduce models of good practice. I would encourage all participants here to study the Commonwealth models with a view to adapting them to their needs.

At their most recent meeting, held in Valletta, Malta, in 2005, Commonwealth leaders urged countries to participate actively in this High-level Dialogue. They reaffirmed their resolve to ensure the protection of the human rights of migrants and of their families. They addressed the worst form of migration — trafficking in human beings, especially in women and children, and called for strengthened policy responses in view of their own Commonwealth best practices, published in 2003.

One thing is evident in the document: the affirmation of the leaders' practical commitment to the establishment of a true culture of democracy — a culture that promotes economic development, which best guarantees that migrants leave countries for the right reasons and that, when they arrive in new countries, they reap benefits for themselves as well as for the places to which they move.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Raymond Forde, Vice-President of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Forde (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), representing the richness and diversity of the world's communities under the umbrella of one set of fundamental principles, recognizes that globalization makes migration an inevitable fact of life for all countries.

Our position has developed from our grass-roots membership, and our first message in this dialogue is that more attention should be paid to the vulnerabilities and needs of migrants, regardless of their status, and that the dignity and rights of the migrants should be at the centre of States' actions and policy reforms.

It is important for States to acknowledge that migrants, whether regular or irregular, are entitled to their universal human rights. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies assist migrants in a multitude of ways based on their needs and vulnerabilities.

Our second key message is that States need to rethink migration policies and regulations controlling entry and exit to and from their territories, with the recognition that the labour movement is part of a global economy.

The IFRC argues for action by Governments at the national level, but urges that such action be within agreed international standards. An important tool in this respect is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Our third message is born out of this context. It is important that all States — especially in countries with a major influx of migrants — ratify and promote the implementation of the Convention.

Our experience in the IFRC leads us to conclude that Governments should share our deep concerns about the exclusion and stigmatization many migrants face in their host countries. Therefore, in our fourth message, we encourage Governments to support ways of fighting discrimination. Integration and non-discrimination are factors that can enable migrant populations to maximize their contributions to the host country and reduce the risk of disaffection and turbulence.

This highlights our last key message.

Governments must form alliances with civil society, the private sector, opinion leaders and their respective Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to force these issues to the top of their national agendas and to work hard for real results.

Time does not allow an exhaustive examination of what the international community and the United Nations itself could usefully do to support these processes. We are pleased that the issue of migration has been accorded such importance in the General Assembly, for it will assuredly be a major issue at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which all Governments and National Societies are expected to attend in November 2007, in Geneva.

We further recommend that the issue be taken up by the Economic and Social Council and discussed at the regional level, led by the regional Economic and Social Commissions. The aim should be to return to the General Assembly in two years with a programme that supports the development of coherent policy approaches to migration by all Governments.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Robert Shafer, chairman of the observer delegation of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Shafer (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): Allow me, Madam President, to congratulate you on your recent election and to wish you every success in carrying out your responsibilities.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta commends the work of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. As shown in the report of the Secretary-General issued last May, there are now almost 200 million persons who have migrated from their home countries to other countries, most seeking, of course, a better life for themselves and for their families.

As the Secretary-General also notes, however, the migration of such vast numbers of persons also presents correspondingly large challenges in protecting the human rights of migrants. We must never let their staggeringly high number — 200 million — blind us to the reality that each of those millions of men, women and children is an individual human being.

These are issues of profound historical and continuing concern to the Order of Malta. When the Order of Malta was created over 900 years ago, our mission was to protect and care for persons in need, particularly the poor and those travelling far from home. We follow this mission today.

As part of this worldwide programme of aiding the poor, we have found that migrants often are among the most vulnerable and the most defenceless. Too often they are invisible, or worse.

In particular, I note the often abusive treatment that migrants receive under what are euphemistically called "guest worker" programmes. These persons too often receive substandard wages — wages that frequently are offset by the exorbitant charges they are forced to pay to their employers for food and lodging. Similarly, the so-called "brokers" who recruit these migrants in their home countries and ship them like chattel to other countries often hold them bound to such inflated fees that migrant workers may remain perpetually in bondage, unable to pay off their supposed debts or to provide the amount of earnings to their families that originally stoked the migratory dream in the first instance. Such schemes often involve the misuse of Government-issued travel documents.

Abuses like these afflict millions of migrant men, women and children. Governments can provide real relief. There are some short-term economic advantages to States that it may be hard for Governments to ignore. Some countries may be content to export their citizens so that they can generate remittances that may alleviate local poverty or fuel local investment. Some receiving countries, developing and developed alike, may see an economic benefit to using low-cost

suppliers of goods, ignoring the high price paid only by the labourer.

That is why it is absolutely vital that the High-level Dialogue and all subsequent discussions of migration and development pay careful attention to the obligations of all affected States to protect the human rights of migrants. The Military Order of Malta appreciates the opportunity to present its views on these important issues and encourages continuing discussion beyond the forum of this Dialogue.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luis Da Fonseca, Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

Mr. Da Fonseca (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries): Let me start by congratulating you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly, as well as on the excellent manner in which you have been conducting the proceedings of this important and unprecedented High-level Dialogue. I would also like to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the high quality of his report (A/60/871) on international migration, which constitutes a very valuable contribution on how to further enhance the development impact of international migration.

The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) is an intergovernmental organization with eight economically diverse member States spanning four continents. Our countries share a common language and a rich cultural heritage resulting from long periods of historical contact, generating cultural connections that helped to build bridges and facilitated further contacts. Migration is a phenomenon that concerns all members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries as source, transit and destination countries. Portugal — a former source country itself — is now the preferred destination of a considerable number of lusophone and other migrants. But migration flows in our space are multidirectional: while most Portuguese-speaking migrants have chosen Portugal as their destination, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique have also become destination and transit countries, not only for the Community's citizens but also for those from elsewhere.

The impact of migration on our societies is becoming increasingly apparent in terms of its economic, social, cultural and political aspects. For this reason, we welcome this comprehensive debate. The CPLP joins the consensus that seems to be emerging within the international community on the positive contributions of migration to development and on the need to take effective measures to protect the rights of migrants and combat discrimination against them, as well as to combat the transnational traffic in people, which targets mainly women and children, and other human rights violations.

In fact, the CPLP concurs with the Secretary-General that international migration is intrinsically linked to the development of both receiving and sending countries. Nevertheless, we believe that, if co-development is to work, it is imperative that two conditions be met. International guidelines to improve the governance of migration need to be established and, at the national level, migration policymaking needs to be closely coordinated with development policies.

Those were some of the outcomes that emerged from a seminar on migration and development within the CPLP framework held in Lisbon in June. During the seminar, participants agreed that if appropriate policies are implemented, migrants will be able to simultaneously contribute to the development both of their country of origin and of the receiving country. We view this as one of the most promising opportunities offered by twenty-first-century migration.

The fact is that know-how can now be easily transferred, making it possible to convert brain drain into brain gain. In this respect, however, it is important to, among other measures, promote the economic, social and political integration of migrants in the host country; ease the red tape involved at various levels in the relationship between migrants and public administration; reduce the cost of remittance transfers; and raise awareness regarding the active role that migrants can play in development.

Even though economic migration can make a positive contribution, we cannot ignore the fact that it is generally motivated by poverty in the source countries. Conditions should therefore be put in place to improve people's living standards, so as to ensure that migration, if undertaken, is not a result of the failure of the development process. Governments, the private sector and civil society should work together to create conditions that allow citizens' needs to be met in their country of choice, including their birthplace.

When it comes to facilitating development through migration, regional and other intergovernmental organizations, such as the CPLP, should participate actively at the regional level, by promoting greater coordination among States, and, at the global level, by fostering cooperation between international organizations and by sharing positive experiences and best practices.

It was with this in mind that the CPLP, at its most recent summit meeting, held in July 2006 in Guinea-Bissau, adopted a resolution on the importance of involving the diaspora in the development process. In addition, a total of five circulation agreements were adopted in 2002, aimed essentially at facilitating the circulation of CPLP citizens within the Community. An Observatory of Migration Flows has also been created to compile and share accurate and up-to-date statistical data on the flow of migrants within the CPLP. These are measures that will hopefully bear fruit and promote the full integration of CPLP migrants, granting them the necessary support to effectively act as development agents, while at the same time preventing illegal migration.

The linkage between migration and development is gradually being acknowledged by the international community, making it possible for international migration issues to be systematically incorporated into national, regional and global development strategies in both the developing and the developed world.

In this context, we strongly support the Secretary-General's proposal on the setting up of a global forum on migration and development. We believe that the holding of this High-level Dialogue is an important first step in that direction.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fernando Valenzuela, chairman of the observer delegation of the European Community.

Mr. Valenzuela (European Community) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the organization of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. The debates during these two days have shown that these issues are of great interest. The European Union is particularly interested in these questions, as is reflected in the statements of the Finnish presidency and other member States of the European Union.

When speaking of migration, we think of the South-North movement of poor people from poor countries who undertake long and often dangerous journeys to work in wealthier countries. The reality of our globalized world is, however, much more complex and changing. The political debate should turn around a broader concept than that of migration and look at the idea of mobility. From that point of view, the experience of the European Union has much to teach us; the free circulation of persons is now a reality within the European Union.

At the international level, the free circulation of persons is an unrealistic prospect. However, it is possible and desirable to facilitate regular movements of persons. In addition, the European Union supports efforts towards regional integration, convinced as it is that they can contribute to making the free circulation of persons a reality within the regions concerned. The progressive implementation of a European migration and asylum policy goes hand in hand with notable efforts to ensure coherence between those policies and the contribution of the European Union to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. For the European Commission, the main issue of this Dialogue is the link between migratory phenomena and development in the countries of origin.

Allow me to give some examples of the efforts being made by the European Commission along those lines. In addition to the very substantial development assistance provided by the European Union, the Commission is considering various initiatives to help immigrants make a contribution to the development of their countries of origin, whether in terms of remittances or through the promotion of circular and return migration. At the same time, the Commission is studying with its partners, especially in Africa, measures to attenuate the adverse effects of the emigration of specialized workers, often referred to as brain drain. Likewise, the Commission is prepared to work with its partners to develop their capacity to limit irregular, clandestine migration and promote legal migration. The European Commission is also ready to help those countries interested in carrying out detailed studies that should help them to establish coherent migration policies and that will allow donors to determine the best possible use of this assistance. Those are the main areas of cooperation that the European Union is endeavouring to develop with the countries of origin and transit in a spirit of shared responsibility in the face of what we consider to be a joint challenge.

These are also questions that in our opinion should be included in the exchange of experiences and good practices that could be developed within the framework of the international consultative forum mentioned yesterday by the Secretary-General. The European Commission feels that the future work of the forum and the efforts of Mr. Peter Southerland, the extension of whose term of office we welcome, could contribute usefully to furthering the debate at the international level concerning the links between migration and development, especially in countries of origin.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Halima Kassim, Deputy Programme Manager for Gender Affairs and Caribbean Community Development of the Caribbean Community.

Ms. Kassim (Caribbean Community): I bring greetings from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and in particular from the Secretary-General, Mr. Edwin Carrington, who regrettably could not be here. I also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

CARICOM is made up of 15 member States and five associate members, and we support the statements made by those States. Recognizing the impact of migration on the development of the Community, the matter was discussed at the level of the highest decision-making body of CARICOM, which welcomes this High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and hopes that it will contribute to an exchange of best practices on migration and development and foster cooperation on key migration issues at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Migration is an expression of an individual's will for an improvement in his or her economic situation and a better quality of life, but it also involves relations between sovereign States. In that regard, there is a need for strengthening the governance of migration at the national, regional and international levels, and CARICOM welcomes the Secretary-General's suggestion for a global consultative forum on international migration as a mechanism to forge greater cooperation and coherence on this issue. Migration is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, and its impact on development for the region is both positive and negative. It is clear that the pace of sustainable development is influenced by migration flows that further compromise the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Migration, therefore, cannot be separated from issues of market access, trade imbalances, debt sustainability, unemployment, poverty and inequalities.

Our region is impacted to varying degrees by the phenomenon of migration, as countries of origin and destination, through the loss or gain of skilled labour, movement of temporary workers, flows of remittances, human trafficking and returning migrants, whether voluntary or through the forced repatriation of migrants and foreign-born legal residents to the region. It is worth noting that a study is being conducted in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago on the social implications of the return of nationals who migrated at a young age and return as adults.

Demographic trends and economic developments determine in-flows and out-flows of migrants in and outside the region. Within the region, the flows are also associated with various economic activities. It is envisaged that within the foreseeable future the centrifugal forces would continue to favour intraregional migration. More so in the light of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), as provided for under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Safeguarding the rights of migrants and their families is recognized as an important aspect of this development, and the CARICOM Agreement on Social Security must be considered a supportive measure for the free movement of skills. Additionally, the issue of contingent rights is under consideration.

As a result of migration from the region, a Caribbean diaspora has evolved, primarily in North America and in the former colonizers, namely, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. The Caribbean diaspora plays a significant role in the region. CARICOM recognizes the importance of its contribution to its development and its role in the strategic positioning of the region and in the implementation of the CSME to maximize the benefits that that could bring to the Caribbean people. In that regard, at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government held in July this year, the proposal was endorsed to convene in June 2007 a conference on the Caribbean, which will seek to deepen the region's relations with the Caribbean diaspora in the United States of America.

CARICOM recognizes the effect of migration on development, as reflected in the attention given to the issue by the heads of Government at the twenty-seventh Conference. The Conference agreed that special attention should be paid to establishing policies in specific areas such as strategies for the retention of skilled labour, establishment of a reliable information system and database to enhance national capacity, the building of social support systems to respond to the requirements of voluntary and involuntary return of migrants and relations with the diaspora. They also agreed on the need to adopt a multilateral approach to the issue of human trafficking and to support a multilateral evaluation mechanism to create an impartial and transparent mechanism for evaluating the progress of countries with respect to human trafficking. They supported a recommendation for the establishment of a technical working group to undertake a policy study and report to heads of Government through the relevant Councils within one year.

CARICOM is committed to working towards optimizing the benefits of migration to development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Sir John Rumet Kaputin, Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

Sir John Rumet Kaputin (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States): It is a great honour and privilege for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States to take the floor at this important High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

The ACP Group of States is the largest organized entity for developing countries, with a membership of 79 covering the African continent and the Caribbean and Pacific regions, and with an estimated population of over 700 million. It has as one of its core objectives the alleviation of poverty. That objective, coupled with the promotion of sustainable development, is also at the heart of our Cotonou Partnership Agreement with the European Union, which interlocks 103 countries and represents the most advanced and innovative North-South formalized development cooperation arrangement.

Today, we are gathered here at a time when the global community faces numerous challenges, together with the related effects and transformations at the continental, regional and country levels. In a global partnership centred on human dignity and mutual respect, issues of asylum, migration and mobility are central to the development of our countries and, indeed, are cross-cutting issues to almost all the Millennium Development Goals.

In addressing those challenges, the ACP Group would like to ensure that migration positively influences development. The ACP Group of States is considering those issues in a coordinated manner within its institutional framework. In that regard, actions taken and future initiatives of the ACP Group are captured in the ACP position document on international migration and development, which has been distributed.

I would like to pose a few questions regarding the mobility of people. How many of us are living outside our countries of birth? How many of us are enticed or forced to migrate and eventually find means of subsistence outside our countries of birth? How many of us are willingly leaving our countries of birth to get a better chance to study, work and settle in new environments?

None of those questions should remain unanswered and, to that end, the ACP Group is actively working at defining a common strategy that is people-focused and based on the alleviation of poverty and the eventual promotion of sustainable development.

I, too, am a migrant, and so are most of us. Therefore, we should all endeavour to develop policies and programmes that are focused on the well-being of our peoples. That is why the focus of the global debate on migration and development is so important in looking at possible solutions in a new, innovative and overall positive way.

The ACP Group is of the view that the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development should be not an end in itself, but rather an important juncture of a continuing process. The continuing debate on migration and development should focus on improved integration of migration issues into development policy and planning; capacity-building to develop and manage migration policies; ensuring an inclusive approach to migration, including the involvement of non-State actors, such as non-governmental organizations, business, trade unions and civil society; greater utilization of the development potential of diasporas; the promotion of global dialogue on migration issues, including regional

consultations and North-South exchanges; and greater commitment to protecting the basic human rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

The ACP Group believes that the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development has steered an important process that involves Governments, institutions, United Nations agencies, and international, regional and local non-governmental organizations, and attracts international attention to migration and development. A global and multidisciplinary approach to migration and development issues is the only way forward to ensure that the positive and development elements stemming from migration can be further enhanced. Successful participation in the global migration forum requires an ongoing exchange of information and best practices among countries of origin, transit and destination, taking into account the ever-changing nature of human migration.

In conclusion, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States is committed to addressing the critical issues of migration in relation to sustainable development and, by implication, addressing the Millennium Development Goals. All endeavours to develop migration policies and programmes should be focused on the well-being of our peoples. Let us join hands and together formulate concrete policies and programmes on migration and mobility that are people-focused and, indeed, will complement efforts to effectively address poverty and the challenges of sustainable development.

The ACP Group is convinced that its close collaboration with other actors and participation in this important Dialogue will result in policies and programmes that are in the interest of all parties involved and, most importantly, the peoples of ACP States.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Enrique Iglesias, Secretary-General of the Ibero-American Conference.

Mr. Iglesias (Ibero-American Conference) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first, on behalf of the Ibero-American secretariat, to express our thanks for the Secretary-General's invitation to participate in this event. The countries of our community have been stating their points of view in this important discussion and having been giving their support to the initiative of the Secretary-General. In November, the heads of State or Government of Ibero-America will be meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, and this subject will be a central topic of discussion.

We in the secretariat supported the convening of a seminar in July which was attended by many people, technical and other specialists, and politicians, in order to address this item and start putting together the positions for Heads of State. I would like to mention just five very brief points from that meeting that might interest participants here today.

First, Ibero-America is convinced that migrations are an essential and specific component of the Ibero-American space. They always have been so, over many centuries, and we have always derived benefit from them. Today, we are now benefiting other parts of the world with those persons who are migrating there. From the vast experience of Ibero-America, some important pioneering lessons can be drawn — regarding the right of asylum, for instance — to give an idea of the significant progress that we have been able to achieve in many areas.

Secondly, there is a consensus in the region that a global and integrated approach to the migration phenomenon is indispensable, as well as an international shared agenda based on knowledge of the problems, both in terms of countries of origin and countries of destination. Further, we consider that any domestic migration policy requires international agreement on the subject, but both should place the migrant at the core of decision-making, taking into consideration the problems for all the States, whether of origin or destination. As we have heard here, a migrant is neither merchandise nor a delinquent. Migrants are men, women and children looking for better living conditions, looking to offer their work and contribute to the host society. They accordingly deserve to be respected in terms of human and labour rights, access to dignified work, health, education, and security on equal footing with the nationals of receiving countries.

That means tackling head-on two phenomena that constitute an attack on individual rights. I am referring to the fight against xenophobia or discrimination at the domestic level and the efforts to combat trafficking in human beings and migrants at the international level. However legitimate the security measures that are taken, they should never infringe on the inalienable human rights of migrants.

Fourthly, a special priority should be given in migration policies to indigenous people and women, which we believe have important specific features that need to be promptly addressed.

Finally, through suitable policies, we should enhance the benefits of migration and reduce costs. We understand the short-term benefits of remittances while being aware that these cannot be a panacea in the long term. In any case, it is possible to do things which would help to prioritize and enhance their benefits. We are also concerned about brain drain. We have to do everything we can to keep people at home, seek co-development solutions so these contacts are of benefit to those who would otherwise have a brain drain. I think we have to move forward on global agreements and build on what has been achieved in the Ibero-American countries; it is not negligible.

I think this meeting will provide important guidelines so that the United Nations can contribute to global solutions to this global problem. I am sure that Ibero-America will contribute greatly to this endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor His Excellency Mr. Gottfried Zürcher, Director-General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

Mr. Zürcher (International Centre for Migration Policy Development): Madam President, I want to thank you for organizing this event, which reflects the growing importance of international migration for States around the world.

As so many issues surrounding international migration have been taken up in this forum already, I will limit my remarks to three points. First, our experiences have shown that the value of an informal, flexible dialogue on international migration lies primarily in the promotion of a mutual understanding of issues of common concern. Such issues arise predominantly in a regional context where regional consultative processes can serve to identify concrete problems and common interests, and can help in arriving at coordinated policy responses.

To give you a concrete example of a well-functioning regional dialogue on migration, I would like to mention the Budapest Process, which is a consultative forum of more than 50 participating States and 10 international organizations. That intergovernmental process was started 15 years ago, in 1991, which makes it one of the oldest regional consultative processes in the world. My own organization, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), based in Vienna, has functioned as the Secretariat of the Budapest Process since 1994. The Budapest Process provides a forum for exchange of experience and information among interested States for the purpose of promoting comprehensive systems for orderly migration in the wider European region. Its longstanding record, as well as the recent extension of the Process to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and the south-east Mediterranean region, testifies to the continuing value of that forum to the participating States.

Secondly, let me say a word on the importance of capacity-building. Efficient and accountable institutions for the management of migration are vital not only for the implementation of sustainable migration policies as such, but also for the holding of any meaningful and mutually beneficial migration dialogue. Thus, the promotion of good governance, capacity-building and training, is often a precondition for a structured migration dialogue, and should have a high priority on the development agenda.

Thirdly, based on this experience, we conclude that the optimal level of migration dialogue should correspond to the principle of subsidiarity, or in other words that policy coordination should be made at the lowest level possible and at the highest level necessary. That means that an inter-State dialogue on international migration can and should take place, at the bilateral, regional or global level, according to the issues and interests involved. In that way, even a meaningful dialogue on migration may not prevent new crises from arising, but it can certainly help to manage such crises more efficiently and in a more targeted manner when they arise.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ridha Bouabid, Counsellor of the Delegation for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Bouabid (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): The theme that brings us together today is of special concern to the International Organization of la Francophonie in more

ways than one, and first, because the French-speaking area is in itself a large area of migration. It is made up of 53 States and Governments spread around the entire globe. The French-speaking world includes both developed and developing countries, countries with a strongly entrenched tradition of migration and host countries — countries with a common language. Moreover, we are aware of the important role of language in determining migration routes, since, in many cases, migrants choose countries whose language they can speak.

The problems of international migration — particularly in the current context of globalization — and its undeniable effects on development represent a major challenge for our community as well as the international community. It is a challenge that requires exchanges of ideas and concerted action, which are the only ways to limit — albeit only slightly — migration's negative effects and to maximize its advantages to benefit migrants themselves, their countries of origin and the countries of destination.

That is the context of the discussions that we began in la Francophonie several years ago, including at the international meeting held in Paris in 2001, on the theme "Francophonie and migration", at the initiative of the High Council of la Francophonie and the Government of Canada in Quebec, with the active participation of the International Organization for Migration. Here, I wish to commend them for their commitment and leadership in placing migration issues at the top of the global agenda and at the centre of the international community's concerns. Our discussions are based on the values dear to la Francophonie: solidarity, democracy, human rights, cultural diversity and dialogue among civilizations.

Aware that migratory movements can be a major asset for development, our community seeks in particular to enhance exchanges and dialogue on how to better highlight cultural diversity in integration policies and to implement genuine co-development initiatives between countries of the North and the South, between countries of origin and countries of destination, with the active participation of migrants themselves.

First, we have been considering ways to organize the mobilization of skills in the context of a North-South partnership, enabling the South to benefit from a return on its investment in the qualifications of its diaspora. We have also been assessing the impact of some experiments with decentralized cooperation involving migrants, identifying a number of good practices in that area. Finally, we have been considering in greater depth how to reconcile our aspirations to francophone solidarity with the demands of States in terms of their needs, their interests and even their security.

As recently reaffirmed by the ministers for foreign affairs of our member countries at the conference on conflict prevention and human security held in May 2006 at Saint Boniface, Canada, our discussions on the important issue of migration will continue at the regional and international levels, contributing to the ongoing debates being held on these issues by the international community as a whole.

That is why our organization has an interest in this High-level Dialogue. We are fully prepared to share our experiences and build on our discussions with all concerned international organizations and partners. The global forum on migration and development that the Secretary-General proposes to establish in the near future would be a special forum for such discussions and consultations on these crucial issues. In that regard, we are pleased that the first meeting of the forum is scheduled to be held next year in Belgium, a country member of la Francophonie. We welcome the opportunity to make our own contribution as appropriate.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Kennelly (United States of America): The United States deeply regrets the comments made earlier today by the delegation of Cuba, which were inaccurate, inappropriate and disrespectful to the spirit of constructive dialogue that we have had over the past two days. Those comments serve to reinforce my country's concerns about the difficulties of advancing productive dialogue on migration at the global level. Political polemics do nothing to advance the migration and development agenda.

In response to Cuba's statement, my delegation would note that the Cuban Government's refusal to permit the return of its own citizens from foreign countries, as well as its atrocious human rights record, have caused more than 1 million Cubans to leave their country for save haven in other lands and has led the United States to take measures to regularize the status of eligible Cuban migrants who reach the shores of the United States.

I would like to emphasize that the United States is committed at all times to safe, legal and orderly migration.

Mr. González Pérez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation rejects, one by one, every word said by the representative of the United States. The Government of the United States, which today accuses us and claims to act as the world's great refuge and defender of human rights, is the same country that encourages illegal migration from my country and human trafficking. It even refuses to cooperate with my Government to ensure legal, safe and orderly migration.

The world knows that my country is being subjected to a brutal and criminal blockade by the Government of the United States, which has caused all our people grave and countless suffering. Through that genocidal economic assault, the United States is seeking to overthrow our revolution, seeking to cause pain, hunger and despair among our people.

Part of that terrible blockade and of the political manipulation of the migration issue by the United States is the Cuban Adjustment Act — the murderous law, as we call it in Cuba — because of the number of lives that it has cost our country. The Cuban Adjustment Act serves as a true spur to illegal migration and human trafficking, which contradicts the official statement made here in this Hall by the United States delegation. Through that migration policy based on double standards, the United States has sheltered within its territory kidnappers and traffickers who have profited from the smuggling of Cubans from Cuba to the United States. It has also protected notorious terrorists who have committed brutal acts against Cuba.

The United States says that Cuba seeks to blame it and to distract attention from the human rights situation in Cuba. By making that statement, the United States is telling a double lie. Cuba does not seek to blame the United States. Actually, the United States blames itself; it does not need our help. Its acts demonstrate that. The blockade persists and becomes more intense every year, despite nearly universal condemnation by the international community.

To attempt to justify the blockade as a way to improve human rights in Cuba is silly, incongruous and foolish, because the United States is the country with the least moral authority and credibility to talk about human rights. After its unilateral wars — through which it violates international law and the Charter of the United Nations — the torture committed at the Guantánamo naval base and at Abu Ghraib prison and the massive bombardment of civilian populations, the United States should be silent on the subject of human rights.

The primary violator of human rights now points its fingers at us, claiming us to be the worst. The Government that is accusing Cuba continues to protect the main perpetrator of the horrendous crime of downing a Cubana Airlines aircraft, in which 73 people lost their lives. That Government, through its migration laws, is keeping Cuban families apart and preventing their reunification. That very same Government imposes democracy at the point of a gun.

Any Government that commits such atrocities, as does that of the United States, truly has no grounds for criticizing Cuba. Many years ago, we in Cuba learned to live at a level of dignity and resolve that can never be overturned.

In conclusion, I should like to quote a paragraph from a document, dated 6 April 1960, which was recently declassified by the North American authorities. The document was drafted by Lester D. Mallory, then United States Deputy Under-secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. This statement truly backs up everything we have said. He wrote that the majority of Cubans support Castro and that "there is no effective political opposition". He added, cynically, that

> "The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... to deny Cuba money and supplies, to diminish [personal] income so as to cause hunger, desperation and the collapse of the government."

I believe that this statement is sufficient to clarify everything we have said.

Ms. Kennelly (United States of America): The ridiculous distortions of the Cuban delegation compel me to respond, but I will be brief.

Let us be clear: the migration situation has been created by the Castro regime. Its lack of respect for human rights, its oppressive crackdown on political opposition and dissident activity, its complete intolerance of free expression and its requirement that Cuban citizens obtain exit permits before they can emigrate cause its citizens to take their lives into their own hands and flee the country by raft.

Since the United States and Cuba agreed on the migration accords in 1994, the United States has fulfilled its commitment to providing safe, legal and orderly means of immigration from Cuba. Specifically, the United States has approved at least 20,000 migrants for travel to our country each year since the accord has been in place.

Mr. González Pérez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor again to put the lie to the statement made by the representative of the United States to justify the allegation that the United States is the real cause of the migratory situation between the United States and Cuba.

It is no secret to anyone that 24-hour-a-day radio broadcasts financed by the United States seek to destabilize our country and encourage illegal immigration. The representative of the United States used the word "dissident". I should like to refresh her memory and ask whether the word "dissident" means, to her, a person who is working for, receiving direct orders from and paid by a foreign Power? That is the case of the so-called dissidents whom she claims to exist in Cuba. Those people are paid a salary by the United States and are told what to do. My country therefore has a legitimate right to defend itself against any agent of a foreign Government working against our national interests.

In her statement, the representative of the United States also referred to a lack of human rights in Cuba. I do not wish to repeat myself, nor is this the appropriate time to do so, but if we wish to discuss a lack of rights and true dictatorship, my delegation and much of the world knows that the only dictatorship is that which the United States is seeking to impose at the global level by force and in disregard for the most fundamental human rights.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have come to the end of two long but stimulating days, during which we have discussed, for the first time at this High-level Dialogue, the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development.

We have heard from over 140 representatives about the opportunities and challenges that international migration poses for development in each of their countries. We have had four round tables that have focused on the impact of international migration on economic and social development, the centrality of human rights to ensuring the development benefits of migration, the importance of remittances, and the crucial role of international cooperation and partnerships in addressing the challenges posed by international migration.

Above all, these two days have proven that international migration and development can be debated constructively in the United Nations.

This High-level Dialogue has been the culmination of years of preparation. I want first and foremost to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his support in preparing and organizing this Dialogue. I also want to thank Member States, the various United Nations agencies, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector for their contributions to making this dialogue a success.

On this occasion, I would also like to extend my sincerest appreciation to Mr. Peter Sutherland, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration, for his tireless efforts in promoting the messages and recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General. We look forward to continued collaboration as our efforts evolve.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the key role of my predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden, in organizing the two panel discussions in New York and Geneva, as well as the interactive hearings with non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

The High-level Dialogue has affirmed a number of key messages in the report of the Secretary-General: first, that international migration is a growing phenomenon and a key component of development in

developing and developed countries alike; secondly, that international migration can be a positive force for development in countries of origin and countries of destination, provided that it is supported by the right set of policies; and thirdly, that it is important to strengthen international cooperation on international migration bilaterally, regionally and globally.

The Dialogue has emphasized that respect for human rights is a necessary foundation for migration to benefit development. Many of the participants have noted that some vulnerable groups, such as migrant women and children, need special protection. It was also highlighted that migration is no substitute for development. Too often, migrants are forced to seek employment abroad owing to poverty, conflict and lack of respect for human rights. There has been widespread support for incorporating international migration into the development agenda and for integrating migration issues into national development strategies, including, possibly, poverty reduction strategies.

You have all underscored the need to provide decent work and decent working conditions in countries of origin and countries of destination, alike. That would alleviate the negative aspects of migration, including brain drain.

Furthermore, participants have noted that remittances are among the most tangible benefits of international migration for development. These remittances improve the lives of millions of migrant families and have a positive effect on the economy at large. Many participants have called for a reduction in the cost of remittances and transfers and for maximizing their development potential.

We have now completed the High-level Dialogue. But where do we go from here? During these two days, in plenary statements and remarks at the round tables, nearly all participants have expressed the wish to continue an international dialogue in some form or another. Many participants have embraced the Secretary-General's proposal for establishing a Global Forum on Migration and Development and the offer made by the Government of Belgium to host the first meeting of the Forum next year. I commend the Assembly's commitment to advancing this constructive dialogue on this important issue.

In closing, let me once more thank all the participants for their active participation in this High-level Dialogue and wish them all the best in their future deliberations on international migration and development. In the coming days, I will make available a President's Summary and summaries by Chairpersons of the round tables, which will be widely distributed to all Member States, Observers, United Nations agencies and other appropriate organizations.

(*spoke in English*)

The General Assembly has thus concluded the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 55.

The meeting rose at 9.55 p.m.

United Nations A/61/PV.7

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Monday, 18 September 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Agenda item 56

Groups of countries in special situations

(a) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/173)

Report of the preparatory meeting of experts for the high-level meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/61/323)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.2)

The President: The General Assembly, pursuant to resolutions 59/244 of 22 December 2004 and 60/228 of 23 December 2005 and decision 60/556 of 16 May 2006, will convene today and tomorrow the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

In that connection, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/61/L.2. It is my understanding that draft resolution A/61/L.1 has been withdrawn.

During the High-level Meeting, the General Assembly will assess the progress made in the implementation of commitments; the meeting will provide an occasion to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to share best practices and lessons learned, and to identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, as well as new challenges and emerging issues.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I am honoured to be with you all here today at this High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

I would like to begin by extending my warmest thanks to all Member States for their participation; to the Secretary-General for leading the invaluable efforts of the United Nations in support of the least developed countries; to Under-Secretary-General Anwarul Chowdhury for his substantive role in the implementation of this Programme; to the experts who spent three challenging days earlier this month preparing for this High-level Meeting; and to the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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various United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies for their determination in helping to elevate the status of 600 million people living in the 50 most vulnerable countries of the world.

We are gathered here today to renew and reaffirm our political determination to meet by the year 2010 the commitments set out in the 2001 Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action at the national and international levels. It is only through a global partnership bringing together least developed countries (LDCs), donor countries, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector that we can translate this collective endeavour into measurable outcomes and can face the challenges of abject poverty.

Against this background, I am particularly encouraged that Member States have welcomed my proposal to discuss the implementation of global partnership for development in this year's general debate.

The least developed countries remain marginalized in the world economy and continue to suffer from extreme poverty, child mortality and HIV/AIDS, often with insufficient domestic capacity to have a long-term impact on those issues. In many instances, development is being set back by civil conflict and the cost required to rebuild everyday life. These impediments to development make LDCs even more vulnerable to internal and external shocks and deprive them of the ability to take advantage of the economic opportunities of globalization.

Together, the 2001 Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action represent a comprehensive strategy for a global partnership to lift millions of people out of extreme poverty. At the 2005 Summit, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the eradication of global poverty, the achievement of sustainable development and economic prosperity for all. They urged all parties to continue making concerted efforts and to adopt speedy measures in order to meet the goals and targets set out in the Programme of Action.

As we move forward and implement those noble goals, we must always remind ourselves that poverty has a human face. It is the face of children who go without food, of young women who sacrifice the opportunity for education and empowerment in order to work or care for their brothers and sisters, and of elderly persons who have no one to care for them in their old age.

Recently, in Benin, LDC ministers re-committed themselves to the improvement of their people's welfare and reaffirmed their unswerving resolve to implement the Brussels Programme of Action. As a result of joint efforts made at the national and international levels, in 2004, LDCs were able to achieve an annual average growth rate of six per cent — the highest in four decades. That commendable achievement demonstrates how, together, we can overcome the obstacles to development and achieve our common goals.

However, overall progress remains mixed. Recent studies by United Nations agencies and the World Bank have revealed that 34 of the total of 50 LDCs are experiencing an increase in extreme poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is particularly acute, where by current trends most of the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved by 2015. In fact, over the next decade, extreme poverty could actually increase. An additional 100 million people could join the 370 million people already living in abject poverty.

Although it is alarming, this situation should not discourage us from our common mission, the common thread that gives us unity of action to deal with world poverty — namely, the Millennium Development Goals. Together, we have an urgent moral imperative to eradicate abject poverty. We can find encouragement in the fact that, in contrast with previous centuries, we now have the technical know-how and resources to make a real and long-lasting difference. We must spare no effort to bring about significant changes in the lives of millions of women, men and children trapped in extreme poverty.

When receiving her Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, Professor Wangari Maathai of Kenya stated,

> "In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other".

Let us ponder the wisdom of these words for a moment as we embark upon the task ahead of us. I believe the time has come. The time is now.

On this occasion, let us demonstrate our determination to eradicate poverty by redoubling our commitment and strengthening our efforts. We must reaffirm our solidarity and collective resolve to reach out to every woman, man and child afflicted by hunger and disease. Together, let us give them a real chance to escape the dehumanizing misery of extreme poverty.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It gives me great pleasure to welcome, on behalf of the Secretary-General, delegates as the General Assembly begins a new session.

This midterm review of the 2001 Brussels Programme of Action is an occasion for stocktaking and sombre reflection. Over the past five years, least developed countries (LDCs) have experienced higher economic growth, greater exports and larger investment flows. They have also made some progress towards several human development goals, including reducing maternal and child mortality and increasing universal primary enrolment.

Yet, despite significant progress by some LDCs, their gains as a group have been insufficient to meet the goals agreed to in Brussels. And they have had minimum impact where it is most needed, as we have just heard from the President, in the fight against extreme poverty.

The limited data available on recent poverty trends is not encouraging. It suggests a negligible decline, and even some increases, in income poverty. Indeed, right now LDCs are considered to be the least likely group of countries to meet all the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015. And in an unprecedented reversal of historical trends, life expectancy is declining in several LDCs that are most affected by HIV/AIDS and civil strife.

This is hardly news to all of you. After all, just this summer in Cotonou, your representatives acknowledged the weak implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, while strongly reaffirming the need for its full implementation.

To that end, we must accelerate and expand our efforts. First, we must further secure development on the stable bedrock of democracy, human rights and good governance. Secondly, we must make globalization work at least as much for the poor as for the rich. To prosper in today's competitive economy, all countries need, in the first instance, to mobilize their own resources and attract investment from abroad. Their ability to do that depends, in large part, on the quality of their governance.

Least developed countries must, for example, continue to improve their institutions and strengthen the rule of law. If LDCs are to eradicate poverty and promote human development, we need to do there what we do anywhere else — and that is to stress democratic governance as one of the main foundations of progress.

Such governance means ensuring that the poor have a real political voice. And it means strong, transparent institutions that are capable of providing the services and protections people need most — not just health care and education, but also personal security and access to justice.

But let us be clear: if national action must lead the way, international support must light the path. For if globalization is to have meaning for the citizens of the least developed nations, then LDCs must have secure, predictable market access. They must have further debt relief, and they must have more and better assistance.

Development progress on external debt relief needs to be sustained so that the debts of all LDCs are reduced to levels that prevent their being an impediment to development. At the same time, the rising volume of development assistance must rise further. There is still a way to go before all donor countries attain the 0.2 per cent of the gross national income target established by the Brussels Programme of Action. Yet, increased official development assistance (ODA) remains imperative if LDCs are to fight poverty and build the social, institutional and other tools they need to compete in the global economy. Ultimately, it is from the global trading arena that many of the most durable gains will ebb or flow.

As it stands now, the global economy is an uneven playing field. Subsidies and non-tariff measures for agriculture in developed countries, for example, continue to act as a disincentive to agricultural production and exports in LDCs and work at cross-purposes with ODA. To address this imbalance, least developed countries need secure, predictable access to markets. They need duty- and quota-free access to all developed economies, without

exception, by 2008. They need the reduction and elimination of all non-tariff barriers to their exports. They need simplified and harmonized rules of origin and trade procedures for their exports. And they need a greater voice in international financial institutions and multilateral standard-setting bodies.

Until now, LDCs have benefited from the limited outcomes of the Doha Trade Agenda. Yet, further trade negotiations will likely erode the preferences currently available to them. That is why, as new export opportunities are opened up, many poor countries need external assistance to make use of them.

As that happens, the United Nations, both our High Representative Anwarul Chowdhury and all Funds and Programmes and Departments of the Secretariat, will continue to help LDCs take advantage of more open markets and more generally build the capacity for them to compete in the world economy. As allies of those countries, we will do all within our capacity to contribute. Working together with developed economies and donor nations, I hope we can make up for lost ground and achieve the progress that Brussels envisioned.

The President: I would now like to draw attention to some organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the meeting.

In order to accommodate all the 78 speakers inscribed on the list, I urge speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, on the understanding that this does not preclude the distribution of more extensive texts. I further appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed within these time limits, so that interpretation may be properly ensured.

To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum which operates as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement, an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the five minutes, and a red light will be activated when the five-minute limit has been reached.

Furthermore, in order to avoid disruption for the speakers, I would request participants to remain in their seats after a statement has been delivered.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin and Chairman of the group of Least Developed Countries.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): As Chairman of the Least Developed Countries Coordination Bureau, I would like to congratulate you warmly, Madam, upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the sixty-first session. I am certain that under your leadership the work of the Assembly will be crowned with success.

This High-level Meeting gives me the opportunity, for the first time since becoming President of the Republic of Benin, to address the General Assembly. I would like to pay deserved tribute to all the eminent individuals who have contributed to promoting peace, security and harmonious development in the world. Benin has always been committed to those values and continues more than ever to be one of the most ardent and devoted advocates of the United Nations.

With a view to finding a solution to the specific problems of the least developed countries (LDCs), the international community adopted the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 on 20 May 2001 at Brussels, in a spirit of responsibility and solidarity. The Programme of Action will promote development, and, if correctly implemented, will enable those countries to lay a better foundation for their own development and to create and maintain propitious conditions for growth.

At the time of the Programme's adoption, it was decided to carry out a midterm comprehensive global review of its implementation and identify any problems or difficulties encountered in order to find a better way to achieving the agreed goals. Therefore, and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, we are meeting here in New York to review with courage and a sense of responsibility the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action adopted five years ago and which at that time raised the hope of our peoples — the inhabitants of our cities and countrysides — that they would be able finally to break the vicious circle of poverty.

Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action has made it possible for several LDCs to make progress in several sectors. I am pleased that some have recorded clear progress despite an extremely difficult international economic context, as Mr. Malloch Brown has acknowledged. We are pleased

by the progress, specifically in the fields of health, education and infrastructure creation. Social indicators such as gender equality have improved, even though they remain among the lowest in the world.

As for macroeconomic results, LDCs have increased their average annual gross domestic product growth rate compared to the past, even though this is far below the overall goal of 7 per cent set for our countries by the Brussels Programme of Action. Inflation was held in check in most cases, and the same was true for public deficits, owing to appropriate financial and economic policies. Quantitative progress was also made concerning official development assistance. In addition, as members know, there have been many proposals to cancel the debt of certain LDCs, including steps recently taken at the Group of Eight summit held at Gleneagles, Scotland, in 2005.

We welcome the fact that several of our partners are making great efforts to support us in the implementation of the Brussels Action Programme. On behalf of the group of Least Developed Countries, I would like to express our sincere appreciation.

It is clear that progress has been made here and there, but overall implementation of the Programme of Action has not produced the results expected. That state of affairs gave rise to the comments at the 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, where it was observed that the Programme of Action had shown a very low rate of implementation since its adoption. Many LDCs continue to face the same difficulties as those that existed at the time of the adoption of the Programme of Action in 2001.

The terms of trade for the main exports of the LDCs continue to deteriorate. In certain areas where our exports are already in jeopardy because of the deterioration of the terms of trade, our economies are victims of asymmetries in the multilateral trading system, owing to practices of certain developed countries which are contrary to accepted international trade practices. I am thinking in particular of cotton. As you know, some partner countries of the LDCs greatly subsidize cotton production in their own countries. Those subsidies have dramatic — I emphasize dramatic — impacts in our countries and contribute to the worsening of poverty.

International trade should drive development, as Professor Stiglitz has stressed. Instead, it contributes to the weakening of LDC capacity to generate resources, resulting in the non-sustainability and non-viability of our countries debts. Our urgent and exceptional needs for financing have thus increased and we can no longer meet those needs by relying on our own capacity to mobilize financing. That seriously jeopardizes the putting in place of basic infrastructure, while in so difficult an environment good governance and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms are constantly at risk.

The deep conviction of the LDCs is that democracy has no future, that there is no prospect for democracy in our countries unless it is concomitant with sustained economic growth. I repeat — we are deeply convinced that there is no prospect, no future for democracy in our countries if it does not go hand in hand with sustained economic development.

This meeting must enable us to give fresh momentum to the implementation of the Programme of Action, by identifying action that would enable us to bring about rapid and concrete results, in order to reach the agreed goals within the prescribed time limits. In that connection, the LDCs have already embarked on their own on the task of identifying the difficulties linked to the implementation of the Programme of Action. They have reached conclusions that they have examined together with their development partners, in order to arrive at appropriate solutions.

We are gratified that the spirit of mutual consultation and indeed collaboration exists in the context of international solidarity and cooperation. I can assure you that the LDCs are aware that, if their action is to be effective and lasting, they must untiringly continue to make strides in the areas of democracy, good governance, respect for the rule of law, the fight against corruption, the building of peace and domestic security and the reform and strengthening of their institutions.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the international community that the LDCs are resolved to play a leadership role on the basis of a shared vision to lead their countries towards the implementation of the Development Goals — in particular, through regional integration strategies. However, those efforts require the creation of an environment conducive to the strengthening of our production capacities in order for us to become more competitive, and to stimulate the sustained growth of our economies.

To that end, it is crucial for all of the actors in the international community to join their efforts to reduce the strong dependence of the LDC economies on the cost of commodities on the international market. We must seek to diversify their export products, seek external financing and mobilize domestic resources through savings and national investments.

We will all have to work so that the results we obtain have a direct impact on the eradication of poverty — that stubborn, recurring reality that persists within the LDCs.

Thought should accordingly be given, among our methods of action, to the establishment of a more appropriate evaluation mechanism so that we can quantify our efforts — the efforts of each and all of us, year after year.

I have the pleasure to state that the goals set out in the Brussels Programme of Action are the Millennium Development Goals — those that are specific to LDCs. For that reason I would like to invite our development partners to truly, and better than in the past, support our LDCs in achieving those goals. Therefore, the LDCs invite the Secretary-General — and we welcome his untiring efforts thus far, and would like his Special Representative to convey our thanks to him — to monitor, on the ground, the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action so that we can attain the agreed goals within the prescribed time frame.

I cannot conclude my statement without urging us all to embark on concerted action, with all stakeholders involved, in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, in a spirit of active solidarity, keenly aware of the historic and human responsibility that is ours at this crucial stage in the development of the least developed countries.

Long live solidarity among the least developed countries. Long live the United Nations. Long live international cooperation in the service of development.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives.

President Abdul Gayoom: First, I apologize for my voice this morning, which is not pleasant. Having just arrived in New York from the Caribbean, I am not sure whether I can truthfully say that what I have is a cold. Having said that, let me turn to the issue at hand.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

As this is the first time that I am addressing this Assembly, let me congratulate you, Madam, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. There can be no doubt that your election to this high-level post is due to your broad experience in international affairs. I can assure you that our delegation will work with you unstintingly so that you may carry our your important mission successfully.

(*spoke in English*)

The goal of the Brussels Programme of Action, which was adopted six years ago, was to advance the social and economic development of the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. In the time since, the progress made has been very slow. Despite some achievements, much remains unfulfilled.

I would like to note the tireless efforts of His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, as Chairman of the group of Least Developed Countries, and those of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, in pursuing the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

While the national actions of the least developed countries (LDCs) themselves must be geared towards achieving the goals of the Programme of Action, they constitute only half of the story. The other half requires the realization of the support pledged by the donor community to ensure continuous development of the LDCs. I regret to say that, often, certain realities are hidden behind a veil of excuses for not letting such support flow in the direction of those desperately in need of it. That is to say, while the LDCs are striving to advance their development by exhausting the domestic resources that they mobilize, it is often charged by the donor community that adequate domestic effort has not been made. That is not always the case.

Low per capita income, poor public finance infrastructure and the absence of capital accumulation all contribute to the domestic resource gap. Therefore, continued donor support is crucial for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In 2008, my country will embark upon its smooth transition period. In 2011, we will graduate from the list of the least developed countries. Despite significant obstacles to development, the Maldives has been able to achieve much by supplementing domestic effort with donor assistance.

The Maldives has already attained many of the Millennium Development Goals. Extreme poverty has been halved and universal primary education has been achieved. As for the targets on reducing child mortality, attaining greater gender equality and improving maternal health, I am pleased to say that the Maldives is on target to achieving those goals as well.

In that regard, the Maldives has come a long way towards realizing the guiding principle that only positive concrete processes and outcomes can sustain public confidence in the development partnership between LDCs and their development partners.

However, we are still a small and vulnerable economy with a fragile environment. Our supply side constraints persist due to limited opportunities to expand our domestic markets. Increased aid is necessary, but that is not sufficient. Rapid growth in trade and increased market access are crucial for our sustainable economic development. Any failure of the current round of trade negotiations would inevitably undermine the backbone of the Brussels Programme of Action by crippling the possibilities of accelerated LDC growth in terms of enhanced world trade and global financial and investment flows.

The list of the LDCs keeps growing. With the high speed of globalization, the gap between the North and the South is ever increasing. Can the rich afford to help the poor? The answer is incredibly simple. As Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the author of *The End of Poverty* puts it, the question is not whether the rich can afford to help the poor, but whether they can afford not to.

I firmly believe that there is no better time than now to redeem the commitments laid down in the Brussels Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Finance of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly congratulates you, Madam, on the assumption of the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-first session, and of this High-level Meeting to review the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor as President, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his sterling leadership of the sixtieth session.

Our gathering here today illustrates our collective commitment to address the plight of the least developed countries (LDCs), to lift them out of poverty and to assist in their sustainable development efforts. At this midterm review, it is a time for all of us to critically reflect on how we have progressed in our national, regional and international efforts to shift our countries out of poverty and to be active players in this era of globalization. It is also incumbent upon us to identify remaining challenges to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and to formulate appropriate recommendations to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan.

Samoa has consistently been a part of this review process since 2000, through the submission of its annual reports and participation in regional reviews and ministerial high-level consultations. At this juncture, I would like to thank the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for coordinating global overviews to track progress in where we are in the implementation of the plan.

It is unfortunate to note that at the end of the review, it is clear that while much progress has been achieved by many LDCs in various areas of the seven commitments of the plan, stagnation is still evident among most of the LDCs. Many challenges remain, some of them presenting formidable undertakings for a number of LDCs.

We welcome in that regard the elaboration of the Cotonou Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, not only because the Strategy provides an analytical snapshot of the current status of achievements in LDCs, but, most important, because it identifies the remaining challenges and recommends actions to be taken by LDCs in collaboration with development partners.

On behalf of my Government and the people of Samoa, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions of our traditional development

partners. I am pleased to say that in the case of my country, the partnerships are genuine and needs-focused, actively executed towards national ownership and managed well and in a timely manner in order to achieve aid effectiveness. It is also an integrated participatory process that harnesses the strengths of non-governmental organizations, and in particular the private sector, in all facets of development planning. As a least developed country, Samoa is determined to meet the remaining challenges, secure in the knowledge that our partners are with us all the way to provide support whenever needed.

As members are aware, Samoa has been considered for graduation from the list of LDCs. While that may be a positive reflection of our endeavours to improve the lives of our people, we are concerned that it may be pre-nature and would undermine our achievements to date. The data before the Economic and Social Council indicate that my country has performed well in two of the LDC graduation criteria, namely gross national income and the human assets index. However, the data also show that Samoa's performance under the economic vulnerability index remains poor and that it is one of the most economically vulnerable countries in the world. The United Nations Development Advisory Team, in its vulnerability profile report on Samoa to the Committee for Development Policy of the Economic and Social Council clearly mentions this, and the Committee for Development Policy itself acknowledges it. Moreover, General Assembly resolution 59/209, on the smooth transition strategy, states that graduating from the least developed countries should not result in a disruption of development plans, programmes and projects.

It is therefore imperative, in our view, that careful consideration be given to the areas of vulnerability to ensure that the sustainability and robustness of our modest achievement, consolidated over the years, are able to withstand the impacts of external shocks. I would like to reiterate, therefore, our request for the General Assembly to favourably consider the deferment of Samoa's graduation from the list of LDCs until Samoa's vulnerability profile meets the threshold level of the economic vulnerability index.

Samoa cannot overemphasize the double disadvantage of being a least developed country as a well as a very small island developing State; the impact of any adverse event is felt throughout the country. Every year, we endure cyclones or floods. Our dependence on imports, our single-product export concentration and our limited industries and overseas markets are well known. Our structural vulnerability will continuously generate challenges that have systemic effects on our economy. External shocks, including the current oil price hike, resound throughout our country and impact investment and infrastructural development — indeed, the daily lives of our people.

Samoa is dependent on a few sources of income such as remittances, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, services and an infinitesimal manufacturing sector. Samoa is extremely vulnerable to climate change. We have experienced 16 cyclones in the past 25 years. The resulting immediate effects include powerful economic and social shocks on the agricultural and export sectors, tourism, food security, property and infrastructure that are still felt years after any cyclone.

Those vulnerabilities and challenges notwithstanding, our modest achievements to date are primarily a result of the stringent utilization of assistance that comes to Samoa by virtue of its LDC status and through prudent planning and people-centred financial and economic policies. Largely through our LDC status, Samoa has been fortunate enough to participate in many regional and international consultations and meetings. Our LDC status has also afforded us many training programmes for building and strengthening capacity. Our financial contributions to many international and regional organizations are also affordable to us only because of our LDC status. Loans at concessionary and competitive rates are granted in recognition of that fact.

Samoa's progress and relative success to date belie the extent of our country's true vulnerability to external factors beyond our control, due to dependence on tourism and remittances. The question of graduation clearly underscores the island paradox that we now find ourselves in.

I would like to assure Members of the United Nations that it is not our intention to challenge the graduation criteria. Nor do we challenge the proposal that my country graduate. Rather, I request the General Assembly to look at the reality of a least developed country and a very small island developing State, and to carefully consider the areas of vulnerability so that our modest development progress thus far will not be reversed. Indeed, economic catastrophes following devastating cyclones and man-made disasters beyond

our control are realities of our times that hardly require further justification.

I appeal to Member States' sense of pragmatism and logic to review the graduation rule to make performance on the economic vulnerability index one of the key criteria to be met before graduation from the LDC. Accordingly, on behalf of my Government and the people of Samoa, I request that the graduation of Samoa from the list of LDCs be reconsidered until the issue of economic vulnerability is included as one of the key criteria to be met.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Ngedup (Bhutan): Please accept my delegation's warmest felicitations, Madam, upon your election to the high office of president of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

My delegation welcomes the midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). There is no denying that progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action has been unsatisfactory so far, unless greater efforts are exerted, the prospect of realizing its goals and objectives by the target year of 2013 will be beyond reach. It is, therefore, our sincere hope that the review will engender renewed commitment and decisive action by all stakeholders for the remaining five years of the Programme period.

My delegation welcomes the increase in official development assistance (ODA) over the past few years. However, significant portions of it are concentrated in a few countries, and in real terms, ODA has declined in almost half of the LDCs. ODA is a lifeline for LDCs, and for countries like mine constitutes the primary resource for development. We appeal to all countries to deliver on their aid commitment of 0.7 per cent of gross national income and to allocate 0.15 to 0.20 per cent gross national income to the LDCs. This is a just appeal, as LDCs make up more than one third of the States Members of the United Nations. We commend countries that have fulfilled their ODA commitments under the Monterrey Consensus, which was reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit, and we urge others to do so.

My delegation welcomes the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which places recipient countries at the centre of development assistance. It is imperative that interventions be country-driven and ODA-untied for effective utilization.

Similarly, we welcome the Secretary-General's report on resource mobilization in the context of the Brussels Programme of Action, which highlights the need to strengthen country ownership and genuine partnership between donor and recipient countries. The Cotonou Strategy represents an effort towards ownership and partnership, and it is our hope that the Strategy will be fully supported. Among the concerns highlighted by the least developed countries (LDCs) during the course of preparations for the midterm review is the emphasis by development partners on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, notwithstanding their importance, have overshadowed the commitments to the Brussels Programme of Action insofar as resource commitments at the programme level are concerned. My delegation believes that the Programme of Action and the MDGs are compatible and complementary, and it requests development partners to take a similar view and accord equal treatment.

We join others in welcoming the agreement reached at the Hong Kong World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Meeting on duty-free and quota-free market access for all products originating from LDCs by 2008. That is a significant measure that should have far-reaching benefits for LDCs.

Bhutan is fully committed to the Programme of Action and is making concerted efforts towards its implementation. The Royal Government has integrated the Programme's goals and objectives into its development plans and long-term strategies. The seven broad commitments highlighted in the Programme are in consonance with our development philosophy of "gross national happiness". That philosophy places people at the centre of development and strives to promote good governance, equitable socio-economic growth, environmental conservation and spiritual and cultural growth.

Concrete steps have been taken to enhance good governance in the country. Recently, an extensive review entitled "Good governance plus" was carried out, resulting in over 200 recommendations that are

currently being implemented. As a result, future five-year development plans will see significant planning and fiscal management reforms. Our plans will be MDG-based and therefore result-oriented. It was indeed a proud moment for us in Bhutan when our efforts towards good governance were recognized with the Asia-Pacific best country practice in aid management award during a recent workshop entitled "From Paris to Practice", held at Bangkok. More significantly, Bhutan is poised for a historic political change in 2008, when parliamentary democracy will be introduced.

Our country's economy continues to grow at an average annual rate of 6 to 7 per cent. We are judiciously harnessing the one renewable energy resource that the country has in abundance: hydropower is today our main source of revenue. The private sector in the country is being vigorously promoted as the engine of growth. Many enabling policy instruments have been adopted, and we have made significant progress in our negotiations for accession to the WTO.

We have ensured that our economic growth is not achieved at the cost of the natural environment, to whose protection we accord high priority. Our ecological footprint is small, and policies and laws are in place to ensure that it remains that way. At the same time, growth has not come at the expense of the social sector, which continues to receive the largest share of our annual budget. Last year, our achievement in environmental conservation was recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme Champions of the Earth Award for 2005, which was conferred on His Majesty the King and the people of Bhutan. Next month, the J. Paul Getty Conservation Leadership Award is also being awarded to His Majesty the King and the people of Bhutan. We appreciate the international community's recognition of our conservation efforts.

Our efforts are persistently challenged by the many constraints we face as an LDC. Lack of adequate and predictable funding to finance progress towards our development goals is the most serious one. We have been fortunate to receive the support and assistance of many bilateral and multilateral partners, and it is our hope that that will continue and be further enhanced in the future. As I mentioned earlier, Bhutan is in a critical political transition, and our success in that process will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to maintain and enhance current levels of socio-economic development.

My delegation would like to express our deep appreciation to all our development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, for the generous support they have provided to us. We take note of the valuable work that the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is doing to support the efforts of those disadvantaged groups of countries. We hope that this will continue through provision of increased resources to the Office.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the need of the hour is not to search for new solutions. The need is to undertake the straight forward tasks of working together to fulfil existing commitments and of taking action on the ground. Over the course of our meeting in this affluent setting, we must not lose sight of the human tragedies unfolding every minute in the LDCs. Let us ensure that our deliberations today have a real and enduring impact on precious lives besieged by poverty and deprivation.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): At the outset, Madam, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the presidency of this session. In the same breath, I wish to extend our compliments to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for a job well done.

Thirty-five years ago, when the group of least developed countries (LDCs) was first established, there were 24 countries classified as least developed. Today, the number has increased to 50. Perhaps this sharp increase indicates the failure of the international community to take urgent and effective action to arrest and reverse the deterioration in the socio-economic situation of the least developed countries and to revitalize their growth and development.

For their part, the least developed countries undertook to deepen the process of economic reform which they had begun about two decades ago, while their development partners undertook to make

available a significant and substantial aggregate increase in external support.

This High-level Meeting constitutes a unique opportunity for introspection, following commitments made in implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences in the economic, social and related fields, including the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. It is a fitting opportunity to consolidate the gains made in the past and to take stock of this collective journey by sharing our concerns and valuable insights.

In line with the theme for the midterm comprehensive global review — namely, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010: Redeeming the commitments — we aim to contribute to the debate by sharing with members the issues Lesotho considers critical to the current international effort to eradicate poverty.

The war on poverty and inequality is far from being won. Many developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, continue to be marginalized. We in Africa are at a crossroads and continue to register the highest number of poor people. Sub-Saharan Africa, home to 34 least developed countries, is the only region of the world where poverty has, in fact, deepened in recent years. Although 13 per cent of the world's population lives in Africa, the continent accounts for 28 per cent of world poverty.

For us in Lesotho, the single greatest obstacle to the development of our nation, and indeed to reaching the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is the scourge of HIV/AIDS. We are overwhelmed by the high levels of morbidity and mortality, especially among people of working age. HIV/AIDS has emerged as a major threat to development, reversing all the gains that have been made and ushering in the new socio-economic phenomenon of orphans on an unprecedented scale.

Despite the foregoing, we wish to put on record that, with the cooperation that the Government of Lesotho is enjoying from Basotho across the spectrum, as well as the support from our development partners, we are convinced that we will win the war against this pandemic.

My delegation reiterates the call for increased support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We commend the efforts of the donor countries that have achieved the 0.7 and 0.2 per cent target of gross national income for least developed countries as official development assistance (ODA). We commend also the initiatives taken by some of those countries to set up timetables for fulfilling their ODA targets. However, we wish to once again reiterate our appeal to the developed countries to abide by their commitments to help developing countries in all relevant areas.

In this context, special mention must be made of, and indeed, commendation given to, the United States Government's initiatives, such as the African Growth and Opportunities Act and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Clearly, without new inflows of external resources, development in Africa will forever remain stunted and stagnating.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation for all initiatives taken recently to address the needs of developing countries, especially the debt cancellation extended by the Group of Eight to the highly indebted poor countries. However, we appeal for debt cancellation for all least developed countries in order to enable them to redirect their meagre resources into their economies. The fact that countries such as Lesotho have been able to service their debts efficiently and therefore do not fall within the category of highly indebted poor countries cannot and must not be used to their disadvantage. Real economic growth can be realized only if we all benefit from debt cancellation.

Both the MDGs and the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries are intertwined. Indeed, most of the MDG targets, such as poverty eradication, improved health and basic education, are also embedded in the Brussels Programme of Action. We are therefore deeply concerned that the 2005 Millennium Review Summit Outcome Document did not focus on progress relating to the achievement of the MDGs or issues of development, which, in our view, are the main concerns for Africa and for the least developed countries in particular.

In conclusion, it is our strong conviction that, for the least developed countries to eradicate poverty, the international community must give the development

agenda the attention it deserves. If their special needs are not addressed by all concerned, the least developed countries will not be able to achieve the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action, or the MDGs, by 2015.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Didjob Divungi Di Ndingi, Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Divungi Di Ndingi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): It is a tremendous honour and a genuine pleasure for me to address the Assembly at this High-level Meeting on the midterm review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

However, Madam President, before I go on, allow me once again, on behalf of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, to commend you on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

I would like also to take this opportunity to pay a well-earned tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to convey to him our gratitude for his resolute efforts.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, emanating from the Millennium Declaration, was a milestone in the history of our Organization. For the first time, we committed ourselves to addressing on all fronts the issues of peace, development and human rights. Those Goals galvanized like never before people of goodwill concerned with meeting the needs of the world's poorest men, women and children.

Indeed, the urgent need to fight poverty worldwide, as well as the possibilities offered by the Millennium Development Goals, have become a real rallying point for a global partnership and the cornerstone of development strategies at the international and regional levels.

We all agreed on shared priorities with the aim of finding solutions to the many aspects of abject poverty, namely hunger, unemployment, disease, substandard housing, gender inequalities and environmental deterioration. The Governments of developed and developing countries have undertaken to provide the necessary resources and to implement appropriate policies in order to achieve those Goals. MDG 8 on development refers to the least developed countries, which led to the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Decade 2001-2010, which addresses the specific needs of those countries. The Declaration sets out the principles for integration of the least developed countries into the global economy while defining an approach to problems related to sustainable development, respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, gender equality, employment and capacity-building.

Since May 2001, when the Brussels Declaration was elaborated, progress has indeed been made by a number of countries and a number of regions, but, in most of the least developed countries, millions of people are sinking into poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The vast majority of the population of the developing world still lacks basic sanitary facilities. Fewer than two thirds of children attend primary school. Women are far from achieving equality of representation at the highest levels of Government. One million children under the age of five die every year from diseases that could have been treated. Giving birth is still very dangerous and is attended by a high maternal mortality rate. The fight against such scourges as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis is draining national economies.

Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes the largest number of least developed countries, remains the epicentre of that grim picture. Overall, we see a considerable lag there in the implementation of most of the Millennium Development Goals. Although Asia appears to be the region of the world enjoying the greatest progress, hundreds of millions of people continue to live in poverty there. In countries enjoying the most rapid growth, some non-monetary goals have not yet been achieved. Other regions of the world, particularly Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, have had mixed performances. Progress has been weak or non-existent in the implementation of certain goals, and deep-rooted inequalities persist.

The midterm review of the Millennium Development Goals has highlighted weaknesses, often within our own countries, that hinder implementation. To be sure, the average 6 per cent growth in the least developed countries has not led to a reduction in poverty, which in many cases has even increased.

No single explanation applies to the success or failure of such an undertaking. For every goal, each region and country requires a painstaking analysis. At

the same time, four causes can generally be identified: bad governance marked by corruption and mediocre political and economic choices; a lack of respect for human rights in certain regions around the world; the trap of poverty, in which the economy does not allow the necessary investment; and stubborn pockets of poverty in certain countries.

The least developed countries are determined to take appropriate measures to follow up on the Brussels Programme of Action. The creation of focal points to implement the Programme of Action and the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will clearly provide better coordination and follow-up to the Programme. Those countries can achieve the goals set out in the Brussels Declaration only if there are massive increases in public investment in capacity-building, mobilized national resources, and official development assistance. That effort will need to be maintained at the global, national and local levels until 2010.

The international community's commitment seems to be clear. Measures taken by the Group of 8 in Scotland with respect to debt cancellation for some of the poorest countries, along with the initiatives of certain countries with respect to innovative development financing sources, lead us to believe that the momentum has been set in motion. In that regard, there is a need for solidarity towards attaining just and sustainable development. We need in particular to avoid taking the easy way out by claiming that we can reduce official development assistance by cancelling the debt. Instead, we need here to reaffirm strongly and clearly the principle of additionality.

The participation here of Gabon, which is not a least developed country, demonstrates our solidarity and proves that, in many ways, we experience the same realities and share the same concerns.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Let me extend my warmest congratulations to you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at this important session. We trust that your skills in multilateral diplomacy will lead this High-level Meeting to a successful conclusion.

Our delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his annual progress report on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries (LDCs). The report contains useful conclusions and recommendations.

We support the statement to be made by the representative of South Africa, Chairman of the Group of 77, and that made by the representative of Benin, Chairman of the LDCs Coordinating Bureau, which highlight major progress made and constraints faced by LDCs in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and suggest holistic approaches for its more effective follow-up.

We also share the concern of the developing countries over the lack of progress made in the implementation of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action, despite some accomplishments achieved by both the LDCs and their development partners in implementing the actions assigned to them in the Programme Of Action. The report indicates that the improvement in economic growth and human development in LDCs has been modest. The LDCs are finding it very difficult to live up to their commitments. In order to reverse those trends, therefore, the international community must take the necessary steps to provide the LDCs with the overdue pledged resources to allow them to fulfil the commitments set out in the Brussels Programme of Action and in the Millennium Development Goals.

The continuing support of the developed countries, the United Nations system and the international financial and trade institutions is of critical importance. That necessity was underlined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, as well as in the General Assembly resolution to implement it. The declaration we are going to endorse at the end of this Meeting also reaffirms the validity of the Brussels Programme of Action commitments and calls for greater efforts to be undertaken by all stakeholders to implement them in a full, timely and effective manner.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has spared no effort to translate its commitments into action. The Brussels Programme of Action was integrated into the 10-Year Socio-Economic Strategy 2001-2010, with emphasis on the promotion of rapid and sustained economic growth, poverty reduction and

environmental protection. The fifth Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001-2005 and associated annual plans were all considered to be the primary tools for implementing the Strategy.

Various measures have been taken to put those plans into practice. As a result, gross domestic product (GDP) has attained a steady increase averaging 6.3 per cent for the past five years. Overall investment rose steadily from 19.7 per cent in 2000 to around 26.6 per cent in 2005. GDP per capita improved by almost $500 for the same period and poverty decreased to 32 per cent in 2005 from 39 per cent in 1997.

To further its efforts to fight poverty and pursue sustainable development the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic launched in 2003 the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy as a localized poverty reduction strategy paper. The objective of the Strategy is to sustain economic growth and alleviate poverty.

Furthermore, the recently adopted Sixth Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plan 2006-2010 constitutes a framework aimed, first and foremost, at fully and effectively implementing all the goals and targets of the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy in pursuit of the vision of the country's graduating from the LDCs by 2020.

Despite the positive developments, there remains a lot more to be done by the Lao People's Democratic Republic towards the fulfilment of its international commitments. For the country to achieve further progress in the implementation of the foregoing strategies, greater coordinated financial and technical support is needed form the international community. We trust that those felt needs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic will continue to be met generously and unconditionally in the form of unconditional official development assistance.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sato Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu.

Mr. Kilman (Vanuatu): My Government welcomes the midterm review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010. The Programme of Action provides goals and targets, along with action-oriented commitments in seven critical areas, following a commitment from world leaders to promote development in the LDCs. Throughout this year, various preparatory meetings and consultations have been held, culminating in this High-level Meeting today.

At the halfway mark, implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action has been moderate. Our resolve in implementing measures needed to address the peculiar issues of LDCs, of which five are located in the Pacific Ocean, have continued to be hampered by several key challenges. I refer here in particular to the case of Vanuatu.

Vanuatu's performance in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action is a mixed one, with some progress in the implementation and achievement of agreed commitments and goals, while some are still yet to be realized. Already, it is obvious that some of those will not be achieved within the agreed time frame. Nevertheless, Vanuatu will continue to pursue them over the medium to long terms.

The Vanuatu economy is dualistic in nature, with a rural population of 80 per cent engaged in the informal subsistence sector and the remaining 20 per cent in the formal sector. Vanuatu has an economy which is small in terms of size, resources, market and national output. That smallness implies that its ability to compete internationally in the goods and services markets is limited and that the prospect of achieving high economic growth is unforeseeable in the near future.

The major contributing sectors to gross domestic product (GDP) are the agriculture sector and the services sector, with the services sector making the largest contribution of 73 per cent of total GDP. Agriculture, however, continues to be the mainstay of the economy, as the services sector relies, among other things, heavily on the agriculture sector and the simple fact that 80 per cent of the population survive via engagement in that sector.

The role of official development assistance and its impacts on GDP growth in Vanuatu are also fundamental and will continue to remain critical in order for Vanuatu to simultaneously address its development priorities and to advance progress in the pursuit of the achievement of the Brussels Programme of Action initiatives. In that regard, my Government therefore wishes to raise its concern in relation to the Committee for Development Policy's recommendation on Vanuatu's LDC graduation eligibility status. The

recommendation for graduation eligibility is one we consider to be premature.

Measuring one's eligibility status based on the major criteria of gross national income, the Human Assets Index and the economic vulnerability index, and making a recommendation based on the achievement of the income and assets indices, despite a very high economic vulnerability, especially in the case of Vanuatu, is highly inappropriate, as the gross national income factor is influenced directly by the economic vulnerability index and hence brings into question the sustainability of the aforementioned income threshold. That is particularly true for countries like Vanuatu, which, simply because of its geographical location on the Pacific rim of fire, remains highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides and hurricanes, to mention but a few that occur on a regular basis in my country, and each of which could destroy the nation's economic mainstay and driver, the agriculture sector, in but a few hours or days.

In-depth analyses of the last eight years of economic performance shows a mere 0.69 per cent average real growth in gross domestic product — an economic growth rate far below the 7 per cent target stipulated in the Brussels Programme of Action. Therefore, to recommend that Vanuatu be made eligible for graduation from LDC status does not hold, as even though it may allegedly satisfy the first two criteria, it does not satisfy the vulnerability criteria simply because those vulnerabilities are "acts of god" and cannot be controlled or predicted with any degree of reasonable certainty.

Furthermore, the basis of the GDP per capita ratio supposedly measures the wealth of the nation, but that in itself is prone to errors. The inaccuracies that exist, first, in the data collection mechanisms, and hence the data itself, mean that this measurement cannot be pronounced with any reasonable degree of certainty. In addition, the uses of bivariate statistics to derive an end result do not give an entirely accurate picture, given that they do not explore in detail the relationship between the cause and effect factors of each of the two variables.

GDP per capita, for instance, is simply GDP by total population and assumes that each and every member of the population derives the same benefits as all the rest. As we all know, that is not true. In most countries in the world, including developed nations, approximately 20 per cent of the population contributes to paying 70 to 80 per cent of the taxes, and more often than not that same 20 per cent of the population derives 80 per cent of all the benefits and incomes. This clearly indicates that, within any given population, there are income disparities, and that means that to assume that GDP per capita measures the wealth of the nations is not a fair representation of the actual distribution of wealth. To further base one's recommendations on that one fact alone does not do justice to the nation that is requesting consideration of its views.

In the Vanuatu context, the agriculture sector contribution to the national GDP is a much fairer representation of rural incomes. Hence, dividing total income earned from the agriculture sector by the rural population gives rural income per capita, in 2005, at $263, which is very low as well as very volatile, due to the vulnerable profile of the country.

The use of gross national income as a measure of a nation's general economic welfare fails to highlight the problem of the high income inequality that persists between the urban and rural populations, as well as between highly paid expatriates and lowly paid ni-Vanuatu living in the urban areas. Therefore, my Government strongly believes that using an indicator such as the gross national income per capita conceals the hardship and difficulties that prevail in the rural communities and which one cannot see through reading numbers.

The impact of any decision on Vanuatu's LDC status will surely be felt greatly by the majority of the population whose everyday lives are dependent on subsistence agriculture. Additionally, though the services sector contributes the highest to the GDP, it experiences high leakages, as all service providers are foreign-owned, which results in the high profits made being repatriated overseas, with little investment of retained earnings in the domestic economy.

The gross national income factor does indicate the level of income available to the country. However, given the aforementioned undeniable facts, it is clear that there are income distribution problems that could either be structural or policy-based inefficiencies; hence, we recommend that, even if the country does meet the preconditions for graduation, it would be more appropriate to also analyse the distribution of those measures of status and to identify policy or

structural inefficiencies and to recommend remedial courses of action to assist the country, with a specific time frame for undertaking those reforms or adjustment programmes so that, when the country does graduate, it is able to sustain the conditions which triggered the changes in status.

One must also look at what is driving and sustaining the GDP growth rates and is thus a better reflection of the sustainability of the gross national income. More specifically, whether or not the growth is driven by domestic production, consumption and export growth, or whether the growth is triggered by such external factors as aid and foreign direct investment, they leave the country highly open to shocks caused by externalities.

Vanuatu's comparative advantage in terms of trade hinges mainly on a few low-value primary sector commodities, such as copra, cocoa, beef and kava, which have continued to show a progressive decline. On the other hand, Vanuatu depends highly on higher-value imports, most of which are manufactured items, resulting in rising trade deficits in the recent years. Factors that have contributed to that decline in the terms of trade include the effects of natural disasters, mainly cyclones; volatility in world market prices, the uncertainty of which in commodity prices often leads to discouragement and low productivity; price-fixing by the Vanuatu Commodities Marketing Board, despite movements in world commodity prices; and the European ban on kava.

Overall, Vanuatu's exports have been very unstable due to the effects of natural disasters and external economic shocks. The smallness of the economy implies that there is a limit to the country's ability to insulate itself from those economic shocks.

The Human Asset Index also looks only at the statistics, but does not actually look into issues of the quality of the education being provided. Simply looking at the statistics of secondary school enrolment and completion rates does not provide a real measure of the asset element, as one needs to look at the quality of the asset more than at the actual quantity of the asset in order to have a much better comprehension of the potential productivity of that particular human asset. Again, here the statistics are inaccurate, as the various reports that have been issued by international institutions — including this one — are inconsistent in their statements with respect to the level of literacy, which they place between 33 per cent and 99 per cent. Once again, forming conclusions based on mere statistics may be at best informative, but certainly not conclusive.

Issues of remoteness, instability in agricultural production capacities due to natural disasters and international price fluctuations, the instability in exports of goods and services, market access, statistical data inaccuracies and so forth are other areas on which I could expound further, but I believe that the message has been heard. Given the aforementioned issues, the Government of Vanuatu strongly feels that Vanuatu is not ready to graduate from its LDC status. Therefore, it is recommended that Vanuatu be immediately removed from the list of countries eligible for graduation.

In conclusion, I wish to bring to the Assembly's attention the fact that while the Committee for Development Policy does have the mandate to make those recommendations, as the change in one's status also raises questions and/or issues of potential fundamental changes and adjustments that may be required to a nation's policies, the allocation of a five-minute time frame within which to plead one's case before the plenary is wholly inappropriate. It is perhaps a matter that requires some consideration and attention, as I do not think that this is a reflection or an implication of the importance that this institution places on the LDC issue.

Finally, I would like to express my Government's appreciation to Benin, as the Chairman of the group of least developed countries, and to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in particular Mr. Chowdhury, for their unwavering support for the LDCs.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who will speak on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly today not only on behalf of Egypt, but also on behalf of the African Group at the United Nations, which Egypt has the honour to preside over this month. Egypt has always been fully cognizant of the deep ties that unite it with the African continent.

Today's meeting, on the occasion of the midterm comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) provides a good opportunity to highlight the progress achieved in implementing the decisions included in the Programme and to consider the genuine issues and challenges facing the implementation of those decisions. Undoubtedly, this review process should give new impetus to the efficient and coherent international work aimed at assisting that group of countries in achieving sustainable development and in the eradication of poverty for its peoples. Egypt believes that the international community should render all possible assistance to those countries in order to counter their increased marginalization in the global economy and to help them benefit from contemporary scientific and economic capabilities and to capitalize on the development opportunities of globalization, while avoiding its negative repercussions on their economies.

Eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development for all is a joint responsibility of the countries of the North and South alike on an equal basis. That requires us all to strive during the remaining period to achieve the effective implementation of the Programme of Action by 2010 through serious work and a genuine partnership to support LDCs. That partnership should be based on international solidarity and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Millennium Declaration, and the goals and commitments agreed at the 2005 World Summit. Prominent among those are national ownership of development plans and strategies, and the granting of assistance in support of the development priorities determined by each country in its quest to achieve sustainable development.

The reports and documents issued by the United Nations and the Cotonou Strategy adopted in June confirm the tremendous challenges that face least developed countries. Those challenges lie in the lack of resources to finance infrastructure projects and the primary service sectors of education and health, in addition to the need for environment-suitable technology transfers, while ensuring the sustainability of the development process in LDCs by swiftly integrating them into the international economy and terminating all tariff and non-tariff barriers that prevent the access of their exports to the markets of developed countries, in addition to assisting LDCs that are not members of the World Trade Organization to join it as soon as possible.

Undoubtedly, the time will soon come when the ongoing non-implementation of United Nations resolutions on the ground will be obsolete and unacceptable. Those resolutions must not become a mere moral obligation that may be either implemented or mostly ignored and bypassed.

Egypt today renews its commitment to supporting the least developed countries in accomplishing their development goals. In recent years, Egypt has offered a wide variety of technical assistance to those countries in the form of programmes and training courses, bilaterally or through trilateral cooperation, with the aim of supporting capacity-building in LDCs in various fields, including education, health, agriculture, information and communication technologies, and other fields, consistent with the outcome of the Millennium Summit. Egypt will remain committed to providing all it can to our brothers in those countries out of our solid belief in the principle of solidarity between the countries of the South and in the importance of international cooperation in achieving development and attaining security and stability at the national, regional and international levels, and in particular in our African continent, which is home to the largest number of least developed countries.

Egypt is very eager to use its membership of the Peacebuilding Commission of the United Nations to ensure that the Commission focuses special attention on peace and security in the least developing countries and to assist those countries in creating an environment conducive to proceeding with the burdens of long-term peacebuilding in a manner that avoids the repeated outbreak of armed conflict, while propelling the wheels of development onward in all fields.

Egypt has also used its membership in the subregional arrangements in Africa, in particular the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) — which comprises 13 of the least developed countries — to enhance the volume of commerce between COMESA members. The free-trade zone between COMESA members has provided an opportunity for the exports of the least developed members of COMESA to gain access to the markets of developing countries in COMESA, including Egypt. It has also provided job opportunities for young people and promoted the success of numerous small and

medium-sized enterprises, which has helped to improve the economic and living conditions of the populations of the LDCs. It is our hope and resolve to continue to work for further progress and the improvement of those living conditions.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Filatov, Minister of Labour of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Filatov (Finland): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union on this very important issue. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

The European Union thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action up to 2006 and other materials produced for this midterm comprehensive global review.

The European Union, as a major development partner of the least developed countries (LDCs), takes this opportunity to reaffirm its full commitment to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action as a part of its wider commitment to the global development agenda. The Brussels Programme of Action is a crucial element in the global strategy to improve the situation of the LDCs, and the European Union's participation in this High-level Meeting is a reaffirmation of its strong partnership with the LDCs.

Respect for human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, the rule of law, solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, good governance, sound economic policies and improved infrastructure are the bases for sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation. As recognized in the final Outcome of the 2005 World Summit, development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

We welcome the fact that, beginning in 2001, economic growth in the LDCs as a group has almost reached the 7 per cent target. That has been a result of LDC Governments' courageous macroeconomic reforms and consequent reduced fiscal deficits, lower inflation and reduced external imbalances. Macroeconomic stabilization has been successfully accompanied by such structural reforms as privatization, the easing of regulations on businesses, and trade liberalization.

Trade can be a strong catalyst for economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. It should be integrated into the national development plans, such as poverty reduction strategy papers, of all LDCs. Therefore, trade is one central element in the international agenda to support the Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit Outcome and the Brussels Programme of Action. Market access alone is not enough to improve the poorest countries' successful integration into world trade. That will require increased development financing for trade and productive capacities, combined with domestic reforms and improved international trade rules.

The cost of a definitive breakdown of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations would be extremely high, especially for the most vulnerable of the developing countries. What we now risk losing is far more significant than just the issues on which the negotiations have foundered. Completing the Doha Development Agenda would substantially help LDCs in their objective to integrate better into the world economy. The European Union, for its part, will do its utmost to secure an early resumption of negotiations and calls on its trading partners, in particular the major players, to make the necessary moves to enable negotiations to restart and reach a positive outcome.

It is important that improved market access for LDCs be supported by appropriate trade-related technical assistance. The European Union strongly supports such initiatives as Aid for Trade. In that context, it underlines the importance of contributing to the Enhanced Integrated Framework. Such initiatives should not lose their impetus with the current situation of the negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda, and the international community should support their rapid execution.

In December 2005, the European Union member States committed themselves, within the framework of their future development assistance commitments, to strive to increase their spending on trade-related

assistance to €1 billion per year by 2010. That would bring the contribution of the European Union as a whole, including the Community contribution, to €2 billion per year by 2010. The economic partnership agreements under negotiation complement our trade-related technical assistance.

Strengthening and expanding the productive capacities and infrastructure of the LDCs is necessary for regional integration, increased internal and international trade, and economic growth and development. To meet those challenges, the European Union has, for example, adopted the Strategy for Africa, which includes an initiative on a European Union-Africa partnership for infrastructure.

Despite good overall economic growth, poverty and deprivation remain high in most of the LDCs. That underlines the need to support improved overall governance, the fight against corruption, the rule of law and more equal social development in the LDCs. Economic wealth and development should also benefit the most vulnerable parts of the population. To that end, education, health and gender-equality programmes are vital elements of our Programme of Action in order to achieve better functioning, more equal and environmentally more sustainable economies in the LDCs. That is especially important in those countries where all of society is jeopardized by such threats as HIV/AIDS.

In education, some figures are really encouraging, although improvements in the quality of education have not kept pace with increased enrolment. It is still alarming that, in 2004, almost 15 per cent of girls living in LDCs were not even enrolled in primary education. That is why the European Union remains very concerned about the slow progress made in promoting gender equality. The LDCs should fully mainstream gender into all of their development plans.

Reducing vulnerabilities and managing the environment sustainably in the LDCs is at the heart of the Brussels Programme of Action, as well as of the broader development agenda, particularly in our endeavour to fully implement the commitments of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

We note with satisfaction the increase in official development assistance (ODA) from donor countries to the LDCs. In 2001, the year when the Brussels Programme of Action was adopted, the yearly ODA to LDCs was approximately €10 billion. By 2004, that amount had almost doubled to €19 billion, and if the trend continues, ODA to LDCs will double again to over €40 billion by the year 2010. The European Union has put itself in the forefront of that evolution through the decisions of the European Councils of Barcelona and Brussels to considerably increase its ODA by 2010 and beyond.

The European Union is a supporter and financier of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and welcomes and supports the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative to cancel 100 per cent of the outstanding debt of eligible HIPC countries. The European Union also underlines the importance of smooth transition from the list of LDCs and is ready to help the countries which have graduated from the list.

The European Union is very attentive to the quality of aid. Major commitments to a more coordinated and complementary development policy were made by the larger development community in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was adopted in March 2005 and to which we are fully committed. The European Consensus for Development sets the principles for increased aid effectiveness and coherence.

As expressed in the European Consensus, it is necessary to support and strengthen credible institutions not only at the central and regional levels, but also at the local level. In that context, the principle of subsidiarity has to be mentioned, together with the need for effective policies on decentralization and accountability, capacity development and empowerment of civil society, especially at the grass-roots level. Progress in all those aspects will result in bringing about more equity and equality of opportunity.

To conclude, we can clearly state that poverty is not invincible. Relatively new positive trends, such as the improvement of the situation in many LDCs and the graduation of Cape Verde and the Maldives from the list of LDCs, must keep us from the temptation of resignation. Those trends reflect the first results of the Brussels Programme of Action. We should continue its firm implementation until 2010. The goals are demanding, but with growing resources and even more attention from every partner, we should be able to realize challenges during the remaining five years of the Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) *(spoke in French)*: Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on your election and to wish you much luck and courage in the very important and interesting task before you.

The commitment of the European Union and its member States to help the least developed countries (LDCs) has already been demonstrated. Indeed, it was under European Union auspices that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001. The eradication of poverty and sustainable development were identified at the time as the priorities of the Brussels Programme of Action, the implementation of which we are reviewing today, halfway through its period of implementation from 2001 to 2010.

It is within the spirit of resolute and long-standing European commitment that I should also like to endorse the statement made by the Finnish representative on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is even more pleasant for me to participate in this most useful and necessary midterm review given that the Government of Luxembourg has pursued a proactive and consistent development cooperation policy. That policy, a cornerstone of our foreign policy, has two particular features — one qualitative, the other quantitative. Since 2000, Luxembourg has been among the far too few industrialized to abide by their international commitment to devoting at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance (ODA).

In fact, Luxembourg has done better. In terms of percentage of gross national income, its assistance to developing countries stood at 0.82 per cent in 2005 and will continue to rise to 1 per cent in the years to come. In 2004, 49 per cent of Luxembourg's assistance to developing countries was earmarked for LDCs, and that, too, will continue to increase as we pursue our policy of focusing on that category.

In addition to the purely quantitative aspect, Luxembourg has held an ongoing dialogue with all its developing partners, the LDCs in particular. Luxembourg's cooperation identifies its interventions on the basis of that dialogue and in accordance with the priorities identified by the partner Governments in their national development strategies.

Partnership is not an empty word to us. We are convinced that only relations on an equal footing between development partners can possibly create the type of understanding and respect that is critical if we are effectively to address the problems of the poorest populations together. We must identify projects and programmes with a strong sense of ownership by the target communities. That is what guarantees truly sustainable development.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for the report he has prepared on the implementation of the May 2001 Brussels Programme of Action. While, on the one hand, it should come as no surprise that, halfway down the road, we have not yet attained all the objectives, we are, on the other, sobered by the warning that a number of LDCs are not on target for success by 2010. Additional efforts by the LDCs and the international community alike are indispensable if we truly wish to rise to the commitments that we undertook in 2001.

In Brussels, we were wise enough to look at the issue from the long-term perspective as we sought ambitious progress for the LDCs. That long-term perspective should not penalize the poorest populations, given that lofty ambitions tend to fade with time. This midterm review is therefore a timely opportunity to restore momentum. The progress made over the past five years should encourage us.

The total amounts earmarked for ODA reached unprecedented levels in 2005. While part of the increase was attributable to contributions to the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the alleviation of Iraq's debt, we must not forget that in May 2005, under the Luxembourg presidency and at the initiative of my colleague the Minister for Cooperation — acting consistently with his predecessors in charge of Luxembourg's cooperation policy — the States members of the European Union decided to raise assistance to developing countries to 0.56 per cent of gross national income in 2010 and to 0.7 per cent in 2015. That new quantitative political commitment was built on the foundation of an initiative adopted in March 2005, when the industrialized and developing countries, including many LDCs, adopted the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Respect for international commitments underpins relations of trust within a well-defined and effective partnership between donor and developing countries. In that respect, I have the pleasure of confirming that Luxembourg earmarked more than 0.3 per cent of its gross national income to LDCs in 2004. The Brussels promise to reserve between 0.15 per cent and 0.2 per cent has been more than met. We have implemented it in the context of indicative cooperation programmes with 10 privileged partner countries. Those programmes guarantee, in the medium term and in conformity with the national development programmes of our partners, predictable assistance on the part of Luxembourg.

Such social sectors as education, health, access to water and local development are priorities of our cooperation. In view of the Secretary-General's recommendations, we are confident that this sectoral targeting will contribute concretely to achieving progress in the areas of governance, capacity-building and institution-building in LDCs, and above all gender parity and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the continuing support of the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs. They will find us to be reliable and trustworthy partners.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Ms. Zuma (South Africa): Allow me to congratulate the President on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are delighted to see her presiding over this Meeting.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the High-level Meeting to assess the progress made in the first five years of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.

The Group of 77 and China further welcomes the Cotonou Strategy, a comprehensive analytical midterm review of the status of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the first five years which clearly and succinctly outlines the achievements made thus far, the challenges ahead and the actions to be taken together by the least developed countries and development partners.

As a result of this midterm review, the Group of 77 and China notes with concern that insufficient progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and that, as indicated, very few least developed countries are expected to be able to meet the Brussels Programme of Action's objectives, goals and targets if current trends continue. The full implementation of the seven commitments must be adhered to if the least developed countries are to achieve the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In spite of the appropriate measures taken and tremendous efforts made by the least developed countries themselves to build enabling national environments for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in their efforts to pursue much-needed development, the support received from development partners is still insufficient or sometimes even completely lacking. The Group of 77 and China therefore calls on the development partners of the least developed countries to expeditiously fulfil their commitments.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome reaffirmed the commitments made to address the special needs of the least developed countries and urged all countries, all relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures for meeting in a timely manner the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

We do not, however, think that sufficient work has been done to meet those commitments that were made as late as 2005. Achieving the goals and targets contained in the Programme of Action calls for continued and renewed commitment from the least developed countries and the development partners alike. It is vital that this partnership be reinvigorated and enhanced by promoting mutual and shared responsibilities between the least developed countries and their development partners in the interests of promoting economic growth and sustainable development in the least developed countries, thereby further promoting their integration into the world economy.

I would also like to reaffirm and agree with the midterm review that special attention should be given to gender equality. Gender equality is important not only in itself, but also in the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals, such as reducing infant and maternal mortality, because without gender equality it will be very to attain those two goals. It is also important that agriculture, infrastructure, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and the obstacles to the exports of the least developed countries be attended to.

In conclusion, I should also like to say that coordinated action on the part of the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes should be enhanced to support least developed countries. More importantly, the development partners must fulfil the commitments they made at all the major United Nations summits over the past 10 years, especially the Monterey International Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. We all have a collective responsibility to assist and to show our solidarity with the least developed countries.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rudolph Insanally, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guyana, who will speak on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): On this important agenda item, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Rio Group.

At this review of the Brussels Programme of Action, we must assess frankly the gains that have been made and seek to redeem the commitments of the Programme, as the thematic focus for this High-level Meeting enjoins us to do.

Important developments, including the doubling of official development assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) since 1999, the substantial reduction of the debt of the poorest countries, increased duty-free and quota-free market access for most LDC products, more systematized flows of untied aid, and increases in private capital flows provide encouraging signs that affirm the Brussels Programme as an invaluable catalyst for the sustainable growth and development of the LDCs.

At the recent High-level Dialogue on migration, much was made of the fact that LDCs now enjoy high volumes of remittances. Indeed, that is the case, but as a recent study by the International Monetary Fund has shown, those gains do not adequately compensate for the losses of skills and other resources on the part of the LDCs. All that glitters is not gold.

In the interests of time, I shall restrict my statement and make a longer version available to the General Assembly, but I wish simply to make the point that the situation of the LDCs remains very precarious. A comparison of available selected data for the LDCs reveals the arduous effort required to honour the commitments articulated in the Brussels Programme.

More worryingly, at present rates, even the minimal threshold of expected achievement cannot be guaranteed. In light of other considerations, such as the negative impact of the high incidence of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases and the need for quality economic growth, the reduction of inequalities and the preservation of the natural environment, a more sombre outlook for the LDCs is inevitable.

At this midpoint of the third Programme of Action, it is imperative that we make the changes necessary to ensure that our course is firmly charted towards achievement beyond the disappointing level of results of previous Programmes.

The first five years have underscored the efficacy of partnerships in achieving the objectives of the Programme. More intensive cooperation can thus accelerate progress and development to counter the crippling effects of the unequal global trade rules that now prevail. LDCs have themselves provided the leadership in articulating the focus and commitment now necessary to guarantee the full implementation of the Programme of Action. The Rio Group would call attention in that regard to the approach outlined in the Cotonou Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action.

Countries of our Group have advanced proposals at the global level that take account of the kind of thinking, action and collaboration necessary if further progress is to be achieved. We believe that, in advancing the agenda of the LDCs, as well as other countries and regions that face special challenges, we must give greater consideration to ensuring that those proposals go beyond these limited objectives, including the call by my own country for the establishment of a new global human economic and social system, the Action Against Hunger and Poverty initiative of Brazil,

Chile and others, and the international humanitarian fund proposed by Venezuela.

The standard for the judgement of success stipulated by the Programme of Action itself is its contribution to the progress of LDCs towards achieving international development targets, as well as, if necessary, their graduation from the ranks of the LDCs. The report card at this stage shows that much better can and should be done.

The Rio Group therefore supports the strong renewal of the political commitment to LDCs by this High-level Meeting. We express our continued interest in the development of the LDCs and encourage all actors — the LDCs themselves, the partner countries, the international community and the Secretariat which helps them — to redouble their efforts to assure greater success and the full achievement of the objectives of the Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moctar Ouane, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to convey to the President of the General Assembly the warm congratulations of the delegation of Mali on her outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

I should like next to congratulate and thank Mr. Chowdhury, High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as well as all those who contributed to the excellent organization of this High-level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. By virtue of Mr. Chowdhury's dynamic and effective leadership, this Meeting is most timely, and the commitment shown by all has convinced us that it will produce important results that will allow us to pursue the implementation of the seven commitments contained in the Brussels Programme of Action.

Where do we find ourselves five years after the adoption of the Programme of Action? Let us be frank — the results do not live up to expectations. As a result, the least developed countries (LDCs) and their development partners need to devote additional efforts at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels to meeting the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action. It is from that standpoint that I wish very briefly to share the experience of Mali in this area.

Mali took active part in the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which adopted the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action. As a result, in 2002 the Government of Mali adopted a single reference framework for its development strategies and policies, which we call our Strategic Framework to Combat Poverty 2002-2006. The Framework identified three pillars covering the seven Brussels Programme of Action commitments: institutional development and improving governance and participation; developing human resources and access to basic social services; and developing basic infrastructure and productive sectors. In that regard, Mali's national report on its implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action allows us to come to the following conclusions.

With regard to access to basic social services, the overall education rate rose by 9.6 per cent, from 64.4 per cent in 2002 to 74 per cent in 2005. The proportion of people living within 5 kilometres of a health-care centre rose from 44 per cent in 2002 to 50 per cent in 2005. Vaccination coverage for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and poliomyelitis 3 rose from 75 per cent in 2002 to 90 per cent in 2005. Access to drinking water rose from 57 per cent in 2002 to 66.1 per cent in 2005. Although they fell, maternal and infant mortality rates continue to be of concern at 500 per 100,000 live births and 113 per 1,000 live births, respectively.

As to basic infrastructure, telephone coverage rose from one line per 100 inhabitants in 2002 to seven lines per 100 in 2005. The overall rate for access to electricity rose from 12 per cent in 2002 to 15.03 per cent in 2005.

With respect to good governance, major progress was made with the adoption of a plan to modernize administration and to institutionalize the office of the general auditor.

However, the overall poverty rate did not fall during this period, despite the fact that the Malian economy enjoyed a real growth rate of approximately 5.1 per cent of gross domestic product, which falls short of the goal of 6.7 per cent identified by the Strategic Framework.

Very clearly, such conclusions can be applied to almost every least developed country. What is to be done? Let us first recall the truism that there can be no reduction of poverty without sustainable economic growth and a fair redistribution of the fruits of that growth. That is why Mali, drawing the lessons of the implementation of its first Strategic Framework, drafted a second for the period 2007-2011 that focuses on economic growth, in particular the development of productive sectors, the pursuit and consolidation of structural reform, and enhanced access to basic social services.

It is also clear that our objective to cut poverty in half by 2010 will require the international community's resolute commitment to increasing official development assistance, enhancing its effectiveness, and promoting the establishment of an international environment to facilitate the mainstreaming of the LDCs into the global economy. It will also require direct foreign investment and technology transfers.

There is also a need for the increased involvement of the Office of the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in making the case to donors and cooperation agencies and in capacity-building for the LDCs, particularly in the area of trade.

Let me end as I started by stressing that Mali expects the declaration that will be adopted as the outcome of this High-level Meeting to be commensurate with the commitments that we all made in 2001, for how can we reasonably accept that, at a time when the world is richer than ever, the number of inhabitants of LDCs living in poverty will increase from 334 million in 2000 to 471 million in 2015?

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. M. Morshed Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh): I will try to make my statement brief.

This midterm review of the Programme of Action is extremely important for all of us, especially as we take stock of why the least developed countries (LDCs) are yet to achieve the target growth rate of 7 per cent per year and increase the gross domestic product (GDP) investment ratio of 25 per cent. As the Programme of Action correctly identified, the achievement of high growth rates will remain elusive for the LDCs unless there are substantial increases in investments. The average GDP growth rate has been less than 3 per cent since we adopted the Programme of Action in 2001, and investments have also remained very low.

For the LDCs, therefore, the primary constraint is the lack of capital. There was an expectation that there would be increased capital flow, development assistance and foreign direct investment into the LDCs to make up for the investment-savings gap, but the reality has been otherwise. Some relevant figures will prove the point. Official development assistance to LDCs in 2004, according to the most recent data available, amounted to $23.8 billion or $35.7 per person living in the LDCs. That is less than 10 cents a day, which certainly is not sufficient to complement income or boost the savings rate.

During the same year, the LDCs returned almost $6 billion in servicing their debts. Another $8 billion left the LDCs in terms of the net factor income of foreign companies and individuals operating in LDCs. The last source of outflow is perhaps the trickiest one — the LDC holdings of foreign exchange reserves. The LDCs collectively held over $28 billion in foreign reserves, in dollars and euros, which is essentially a very low-interest loan from the poorest countries to their rich benefactors. Between 2003 and 2004, LDC foreign exchange reserves increased nearly $5.5 billion: a net outflow. If we deduct these outflows from the official development aid (ODA) and foreign direct investment, net capital injection into LDCs is less than $5 billion a year, or only two cents per day for every LDC citizen. This is certainly not enough to make a dent in the perpetual savings-investment gap in the poorest countries of the world.

Lack of capital is one side of the coin; the other is the lack of market access. Following the adoption of the Programme of Action, the Doha development round of trade negotiations began with a big bang but soon hit gridlock without any consensus on special and differential market access for the LDCs. Even when tariff barriers are low, LDC exports face substantial non-tariff and para-tariff barriers, which essentially prevent any substantive growth in exports. In the WTO negotiations, there have also been attempts to pit LDCs against each other, giving selective preferences to selected LDCs. This must stop, and all LDC exports

must receive the same treatment: duty-free and quota-free market access.

The third problem is volatility in income. In a globalized world, an economic downturn in one country can have significant adverse effects on its trading partners. The LDCs unfortunately have no effective insulation against these so-called contagion effects. More important, the magnitude of shocks can be very different for rich and poor countries, as it can be for rich and poor households. There are also other external shocks, like the oil price hike, which disproportionately affect the LDCs. Then there are weather-related income shocks, produced by floods, drought and tsunamis, which erode domestic savings and impede investment. We need to take into account the asymmetric effects of various economic shocks on LDCs, especially against the backdrop of procyclical capital flows into the LDCs.

How do we tackle these challenges and put the Programme of Action on track to increase investment and growth? Please allow me to share some of my thoughts on these issues.

First, we need an innovative solution to deal with the burden of foreign exchange reserves on LDCs. The $28 billion reserve that the LDCs are currently holding is, in fact, an unfair tax on the LDCs, given that they cannot use it to finance their development efforts. One solution could be to allow LDCs to borrow against their own reserves at zero interest rate differentials. Currently, the LDCs are charged a substantial markup to borrow against their own foreign exchange reserves. The reserve-currency countries must commit themselves to this arrangement. Otherwise, it remains a one-way benefit for the developed countries, rather than for the LDCs.

Secondly, we need to ensure that capital flow to the LDCs is countercyclical. Lending and assistance to the LDCs must increase when there is an economic downturn. Countercyclical capital flows would smooth investment growth and make income less volatile in the LDC world.

Thirdly, we must devise new strategies and mechanisms to strengthen the LDCs' capacities to manage weather-related risks. The international community needs to address this in all earnestness and look into the possibility of introducing weather insurance and weather derivatives in the LDCs.

Fourthly, we need to revisit the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), especially the principle of single undertaking, to grant expeditiously exports from the LDCs duty-free and quota free access to developed markets, pending agreements on agricultural subsidies or on market access for non-agricultural goods. This is an imperative to resuscitate the Doha development round.

Fifthly, we need to step up our efforts to identify and eliminate the key supply side constraints that prevent LDC private sectors from becoming competitive globally. It is time that the international community take concrete measures to activate fully the Aid for Trade Initiative and an enhanced Integrated Framework, not only to remove capacity constraints but also to identify and address the problems of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers in the developed countries that impede LDC exports. Aid for Trade and an enhanced Integrated Framework should focus on the problems in both the developed economies and the LDCs.

Finally, there needs to be some monitoring and evaluation mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations to ensure implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the commitments made by the developed countries. We hope to see a better world tomorrow in line with this position.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by extending my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa as she assumes her responsibilities as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I wish her every success in this High-level Meeting on the least developed countries, and in all her noble work.

This midterm review is a valuable opportunity to assess our achievements in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action, to recommit ourselves to its goals, to exchange best practices and to seek effective ways to accomplish the work that lies ahead.

In my view, the priorities for the efforts of the LDCs and their development partners should converge along the following priorities. First, greater efforts need to be made to adopt and implement national development strategies. Many international agreements

and programmes related to the least developed countries, including strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, are already in place, but the recommendations have yet to be fully incorporated into national plans and policies. The efforts of LDCs to adopt and implement development strategies should be reinforced with strong international support.

Secondly, capacity-building should be the central focus of the development efforts of LDCs and their partners. The improvements made in the field of education and health, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/173), must lead to greater investment in this area. The nurturing of human resources is vital for sustained development. Furthermore, the economic foundations of the LDCs should be strengthened through increased investment in infrastructure, energy, agriculture and rural development.

Thirdly, the role of women in development in the LDCs should be fully recognized. The empowerment of women and mainstreaming of gender perspectives into policymaking and policy implementation is central to social progress. Women's equal participation and input promote development. The proof from the ground in development projects, large and small, is clear: women and girls can be the most effective agents for change and social progress. Specifically, in the urgent tasks facing the LDCs, such as eliminating poverty and fighting HIV/AIDS, gender mainstreaming must be made a central pillar of policy strategy. Korea's experience also shows that lasting social change cannot be realized until women are fully incorporated into the process.

Fourthly, the least developed countries should strive continuously to strengthen good governance. It is disheartening to see many least developed countries continue to struggle in the face of conflict and civil unrest. It is nonetheless encouraging to see the strides being made in many others towards political stability and democratic reform. While it is true that no single model of democratic governance exists, governance can be improved by sharing best practices. In this regard, South-South cooperation can have its own benefits and advantages.

Finally, development partners must deliver on their commitments, especially in the areas of official development assistance, debt relief, market access and technical assistance. Even though positive progress has been made in these areas, more support is called for. My Government recognizes its responsibilities in this regard, and has been faithfully honouring its pledges. As announced at the World Summit last year, we will double our official development assistance (ODA) by 2009 and triple it, to about $3 billion, by 2015. We are now taking the necessary steps to introduce an air-ticket solidarity levy, which should strengthen our ODA. In particular, through our Initiative for Africa's Development, by 2008 we will triple our assistance to Africa, which is home to almost two thirds of the least developed countries.

But aid alone is not enough. The history of development in many countries, including my own, has shown that promoting trade is the most effective means of achieving sustained growth. That is why my Government supports the Aid for Trade Initiative, particularly for the least developed countries, and why we will also expand duty-free and quota-free access for goods from the least developed countries.

This midterm review is an opportunity for us to strengthen global partnerships for the development of the least developed countries. Let us rededicate ourselves to a world that nurtures today's least developed countries so that they can become tomorrow's engines for freedom and prosperity. The first step, of course, is to make sure that we use the next five years to keep the promises we made in Brussels.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.